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QUEEN BY RIGHT DIVINE

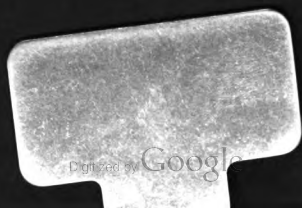
SECOND SERIES OF THE
"BELLS OF THE SANCTUARY."



KATHLEEN O'MEARA



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QUEEN BY RIGHT DIVINE,

And other Tales.

BEING THE

SECOND SERIES OF 'BELLS OF THE SANCTUARY.'

BY

KATHLEEN O'MEARA,

AUTHOR OF 'BELLS OF THE SANCTUARY' (FIRST SERIES); 'IZA, A STORY OF
LIFE IN RUSSIAN POLAND,' ETC.

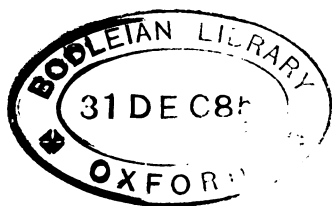
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QUEEN BY RIGHT DIVINE.

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QUEEN BY RIGHT DIVINE.

ON the 7th of September 1787, in a quiet hamlet situated in Gex, under the shadow of the Jura hills, a little child was born, who was destined to be a light and a consolation to her people after the troubled times that were then dawning upon France.

The family of Jeanne Rendu sprang from that old *bourgeoisie* which had been the mainspring of the nation, and the framework on which many of its social institutions rested in those centuries when the *burgesses* held their privileges, and exercised them as jealously as the nobles did theirs. The Rendus had been settled in Gex since the sixteenth century, and had given many distinguished men—ecclesiastics, notaries and magistrates, &c.—to France in remote times, and made a name for the family which it had honourably maintained up to the period when it was about to receive from a woman a new and incomparable lustre.

Jeanne Rendu was the eldest of three daughters, who were brought up by a widowed mother in the patriarchal habits which reigned in those sequestered valleys up to the eve of the Revolution. In those days the daughters of well-to-do landowners went, like Rebecca, to the well with their pitchers, while the sons of the family drove their flocks up the heights, making the hills echo to the sound of canticles that were answered from the valley beneath. Jeanne Rendu grew up in this healthy atmosphere. But though the doctrines of the Revolution had not penetrated into Gex, its action had, and the child was early initiated into the perils that awaited those who stood true to their faith and loyal to their friends. Every priest was proscribed. It was death to assist him in his flight or to give him shelter, and to assist at Mass was to incur great risk to life. Madame Rendu was not a woman to be daunted by these perils from doing her duty to God or man. When her friends were in danger, she opened her door to them in defiance of the Convention, though not without such precautions as reasonable prudence suggested.

Jeanne was seven years old when a strange servant, named Pierre, entered the family. The child noticed that he was treated with extraordi-

nary consideration, and that there was a sort of mystery about him. When any one was present he was addressed and treated as a servant ; but as soon as they were alone, Madame Rendu's manner and that of her friend changed ; Pierre was given the first place, and spoken to with the utmost deference. The child observed that conversations were carried on in a low voice, and dropped on the entrance of a stranger ; sometimes Pierre would disappear, and the door would be locked behind him. All this was out of keeping with the strict principles of truth and straightforward simplicity that Madame Rendu tried to convey to her children, and Jeanne's little brain began to be severely exercised on the subject.

At last one night, or rather early one winter's morning, she awoke, and through the carefully-closed curtains of her bed she descried lights on a table, and before it Pierre, dressed as a priest, and saying Mass. She remained perfectly quiet, and no one knew that she had seen anything ; but some days later, her mother being angry, and about to punish her for some naughtiness, Jeanne said, ' Take care, or else I will tell that Pierre is not Pierre !'

Madame Rendu had no alternative but to take

the child into her confidence, and try to make her understand the consequences of an indiscreet word; for Pierre was, in fact, no other than the Bishop of Annecy. Jeanne promised to keep the secret, and shortly after she received a terrible example of the danger of provoking the fury of that Government of terror, whose arm had reached to their secluded valley. A cousin of her mother's was shot in the market-place because he refused to betray to the profanation of the rabble the hiding-place of the relics of St. Francis of Sales, which had been committed to his keeping.

It was during these days of shuddering flights and hairbreadth rescues, and massacres and heroic martyrdoms, that Jeanne was prepared for her first Communion by the Curé of Lancrans, who, like an apostle of the early Church, went about amongst his flock, in hourly peril of his life, carrying the Sacraments to the dying, and celebrating Mass in the woods and in dark holes and corners. The child's first Communion was like a scene in the Catacombs—the cellar, the proscribed priest uttering a few burning words in low tones; no music, no lights or flowers, but the flame of a faith stronger than death illuminating the subterranean retreat, where the mother and sisters gathered round the

first communicant, trembling at every sound that threatened discovery.

When the violence of the Revolution had subsided, Jeanne was sent to school to the Ursuline Convent. She was a bright mischief-loving child, full of spirit and with a will of her own.

‘I want to do all my naughtiness now,’ she would say, ‘so as to get rid of it by the time I come to the age of reason.’

This desirable date seems to have come rather late, for we hear of her being in perpetual scrapes, throwing her dolls over the garden-wall, and trying the patience of the nuns in many ways, up to the advanced age of twelve. Madame Rendu does not appear to have been alarmed at these mature signs of perversity in her daughter. She had a presentiment, before the child was born, that she would be a child of benediction, and from her earliest years Jeanne gave one sign that justified these prophetic hopes—she loved the poor with an extraordinary tenderness. Her reverence for them was instinctive. If she was in one of her wilful imperious moods, and a poor person appeared, her manner changed at once; she ceased arguing or quarrelling, and turned to address the beggar with engaging gentleness. If she saw a beggar passing

on the road, she would run out to meet him, and, taking him by the hand, lead him into the house and run to fetch him food, her manner all the time displaying the utmost affection and respect. Many a time she emptied her little purse into his hand, shyly, as if she were ashamed of being so bold. Her tenderness to the poor included the servants in her mother's house, and the workmen who came there for one purpose or another. She pitied them, and was fond of trying to help them, especially when she could do so unperceived ; her attempts to lighten their labour being occasionally more amusing than efficient.

With the exception of this distinct characteristic of holiness, the child was by no means a little paragon. Her impatience and self-will were so great that she could not bear the least contradiction ; sometimes a mere word was enough to put the little lady in a passion. From the time of her first Communion, however, she had begun seriously to fight against this natural defect, and with such success that while still very young she became a model of gentleness, and attained in a high degree that angelic sweetness which expressed itself in her countenance, and, in later years, proved one of her most irresistible charms.

Jeanne's piety developed so rapidly during her stay amongst the Ursuline nuns that they were convinced the child was destined to remain with them ; but she never felt the least attraction to the Order, although warmly attached to the Sisters. Her heart was drawn to the sick in the hospital, and to the poor, shivering and starving in the streets and garrets. She used to say in after years that her vocation was sung to her accidentally while she was yet a child. She one day heard a girl singing a sort of canticle, in which the life of the Daughter of St. Vincent was described and glorified ; the last verse promising that her ornaments should be spits and insults, and her crown the vermin that crawled from the death-beds of the poor. Jeanne was fascinated, as she afterwards declared, by this cry from the Cross so unconsciously addressed to her, and from that moment the verse kept ringing in her ears with a force and persistence that she felt to be prophetic.

She was not fifteen when she left school and returned to her mother's house. There was a hospital near at hand, and she felt at once, on seeing the service of the Sisters there, that she had found out her true vocation. It was scarcely a vocation

in the sense of a deliberate choice, for the service of the poor had been as natural to her from her earliest childhood, as impatience and the love of her own will had been until the grace of God conquered these defects. It was a sharp personal pain to her to witness their sufferings and privations; the sight drew tears from her and made her unhappy, troubling her childish play, and later making the more serious occupations of youth distasteful to her, and its amusements wearisome and repulsive. When she was enjoying some pleasure, the remembrance of some poor sufferer in the hospital or in a fireless garret would smite her with a sudden pang, checking her merriment, and sometimes taking away her power to swallow the food set before her at her mother's bountiful table. She was driven to help them out of sheer selfishness, she would say, merely to alleviate her own discomfort, until the desire to devote her life wholly to their service grew too vehement to be resisted, and Jeanne implored her mother to let her join the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paule.

The blow was none the less terrible to Madame Rendu for having been long expected. She combated the child's resolution at first, and begged her to wait until she was sixteen, and had taken some

little time to consider the step. When her sixteenth birthday came, and Jeanne persisted in her desire, Madame Rendu bowed her head, and made her sacrifice courageously. Jeanne took leave of her home, and, accompanied by the brave mother, set out to Paris towards the end of May 1802, went straight to the Rue du Vieux Colombier, and knocked at the door of the Sisters of Charity.

Her vocation, notwithstanding the irresistible attraction of grace which made all things easy, was in one respect eminently a vocation of sacrifice. She was delicate in health, so sensitive to atmospheric influences, that the least change in the weather affected her. She was, moreover, morbidly nervous: the sight of a spider made her almost faint, and the neighbourhood of a graveyard would keep her awake all night. Immediately after she entered the novitiate, she was told to wash and lay out a dead body: we may imagine what it cost her to obey; it seemed to her that she must die of fright in performing the office. She did not die of it, but the struggle of the spirit against the terrors and the shrinkings of the flesh was so severe that nature succumbed, and at the end of a few months she fell seriously ill, and was removed to the Rue Francs Bourgeois.

The Sisters of the Rue Francs Bourgeois had remained undisturbed through the Reign of Terror. They had put aside their religious habit, but continued the community life, and went about in a secular dress ; everybody knew they were *les Sœurs grises*, but even the Communards of the day respected the transparent disguise, and their convent was never violated, nor were they themselves in any way molested.

Jeanne soon won the hearts of the community, not only by her angelic piety, but by the grace and brightness of her youth. She was very pretty, which spoiled nothing ; her clear brown eyes shone with the light of her pure and ardent soul, and the joy and innocence of her heart lent a charm to her countenance and manner that fascinated the elder nuns. Jeanne, in the spring-time of her sixteen summers, seemed to them, what she was in truth, a child ; they used to say of her, ' Charity is a perfect passion with that child ; she makes us all do just as she likes.' It was not that she tried to have her own way as in the old days ; so perfect was her surrender of her will, and her strict observance of the rule throughout her novitiate, that Sœur Tardy, a mistress of rare discernment, and who had formed the young novice, said to her Mother-General:

‘ You will give my little Rendu the habit, and then, I pray you, leave her to me.’

Jeanne was professed under the name of Sœur Rosalie, and sent immediately after her profession to the house in the Faubourg St. Marceau.

The Faubourg St. Marceau at that time was on the outskirts of civilisation, the chosen home of poverty in its darkest and most hopeless form. To a certain extent, it is so still, for now, as then there are no rich, or even well-to-do, inhabitants amongst the destitute population, so that the poor are poorer there than elsewhere ; but eighty years ago the God-forsaken look of the place and its utter, unredeemed wretchedness were greater than we can now conceive. There was no market, there were no shops, no centre of trade of any description. The people found work in the more distant quarters, and when the day was over they came back like animals to their lairs for the night, and to such rest and food as their sordid, miserable homes supplied.

The Faubourg St. Marceau had gained a dark notoriety in the bloody days of the Terror, and, like a dangerous ruffian wounded in a drunken brawl, it was still cowering in its squalid isolation, savage and sulky, prostrate but not conquered,

breathing vengeance against society, without help in the present, or hope in the future. What faith and moral life had survived its long inheritance of starvation and misery had been killed in the fierce strife which had set class against class, and turned the old bulwarks of society into barricades for the Revolution, and left nothing but smoking ruins to mark its passage.

The narrow, crooked streets crawled in and out of one another, as if to choke out air and the entrance of any better life than that which crowded into them, packing the inhabitants together so as to foster every moral and physical disease, until humanity had sunk so low that it ceased to feel its own degradation. The houses were in a ruinous condition ; they held together while they could, and when neglect and decay reached a given point, they fell, sometimes suddenly with a crash and loss of life, but mostly crumbling away, and accumulating ruins, and adding to the squalor and desolation of the place. Whole rows of houses stood windowless and doorless ; here and there the roof had fallen in, and gave access by turns to snow and rain and scorching heat. In these abodes, most of which were too damp and airless to serve for cattle, whole families were huddled *pêle-mêle* in one room ;

seething together in the heat, shivering together in the cold, starving together in all seasons.

Such was the condition of their bodies. As to that of their souls, it was in no way better. The generality of them hardly knew that they had a soul, neither did they know that they had a God ; He had been abolished by the Revolution ; they had not been taught to pray to Him ; what vague notions of Him had been transmitted to them by their fathers had been swept away with the altar where He had been worshipped under that tyrannical old *régime* that was now a thing of the past. Here and there a woman was still to be found who said her prayers ; but this was a rare exception. The children were taught what their fathers preached in the wine-shops and practised on the barricades, and here their education ended. Such was the Faubourg St. Marceau when Sœur Rosalie, clothed in all the graces of her spring-time, came to it with her message of courage and compassion, bearing in her virgin heart the wonder-working forces of a mother's love, the redeeming power of a mother's self-sacrifice, the Christ-like graces and divine blessings that every mother holds for the children that God has given her to love, to labour for, and to save.

In spite of her eighteen summers and her utter inexperience, perhaps rather because of them, she was not dismayed by the work that lay before her. In truth, it was a battle-field to which her Lord had sent her ; but she surveyed it undaunted. Love had already banished fear from her young heart, and she advanced to the fight with the enthusiasm of youth and its sweet hopefulness and heavenly illusions. Her first impulse, on beholding the loathsome sink of vice and ignorance and poverty that was henceforth to be her *patrie*, as she called the ill-famed faubourg, was to give thanks to God for having heard her prayer, and permitted her to dedicate her service from the first to the most wretched and abandoned of her fellow-creatures.

It was evident that God alone was to be her helper in this mission. There was no one else to look to. She was a stranger in Paris, with no acquaintances, rich or otherwise, to call upon for assistance. The charitable institutions which had been broken up by the Revolution were still in ruins and their forces dispersed, and the State had not as yet set about restoring them. Sœur Rosalie came just as the administration were awaking to the necessity of doing something. They saw at

once that she was the very person they wanted, and that they could not serve the interests of the destitute population better than by placing at her disposal the resources allotted by the State for the 12th Arrondissement. They took counsel with the youthful nun, and were amazed at the maturity of her judgment, her shrewd common sense, and her practical acquaintance with the needs and difficulties of the population around her. She soon became the guiding spirit of the administration, the confidential friend and adviser of every member of it. They made her at once their agent, employed her as their right hand in everything connected with the use and distribution of the funds at their command.

This was a great point gained to begin with. But her influence over the inhabitants themselves was destined to be her best help, and to constitute her real sovereignty. The poor have keen instincts in judging those who come to help them, and they detected at once that the pretty, bright-eyed young *Sœur* was one of those royal-hearted women who are born to rule over their fellow-creatures by the right divine of love. This was the secret of her power—she loved them; loved them with that love that is born of pity, and so most resembles

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the love with which God loves us all. They felt that God had sent them a mother, that best representative of His Providence on earth, and they surrendered themselves to her like children. Not always, indeed, like good children. The ignorant, besotted pariahs did not change their natures or their characters at the bidding of the young queen, who bent her brown eyes on them from under her white *cornette*, but they gave her their hearts, and made her welcome in their midst; above all, they believed in her love for them, and this grandest conquest that one soul can achieve over another enthroned Sœur Rosalie as Queen of the Faubourg St. Marceau.

She set to work to make acquaintance with her subjects, first in their own homes, climbing up their staircases, which were, many of them, pitch dark and full of holes, so that it required no little dexterity to travel up and down them without accident; and then she invited them to come and see her. They accepted the invitation with such *empressement* that soon the little parlour where she held her court was filled all the day long, and the convent in the Rue de l'Épée de Bois came to be more their house than hers. She was soon the *confidante* and intimate friend of the

whole community. Wives and husbands came to her with their quarrels and conjugal grievances; fathers and mothers with their complaints of refractory sons and daughters; young girls confided their love-affairs to her; young men sought her advice and help in various ways; the very children brought their little sorrows and disappointments to 'our mother,' as they took to calling her, till in a short time she was living in the closest intimacy with the whole population. The most ill-conducted among them came to her without fear; however bad their character, she never made them feel that she was ashamed of their acquaintance, or that they were a whit less welcome than their better-behaved neighbours. But she never minced matters with them. She scolded them soundly when they deserved it, and they took a scolding as respectfully, if not as gladly, as they did encouragement or help. They soon found out that her severity never held out long against her inexhaustible tenderness and compassion. She raged fierce war against drunkenness, but the drunkards discovered that there was a very soft corner in her heart even for them. One of the number, an old offender, who was in the habit of taking the pledge and breaking it several times a month, and whose

blanket, which had been given him by Sœur Rosalie, had been repeatedly redeemed by her from the pawn-office, was at last turned away by the Sisters when he came to ask for help. The winter set in suddenly, and one bitterly cold morning the drunkard presented himself again, and asked for the loan of a blanket. The Sisters refused it, and he went away; but that night, as Sœur Rosalie lay perishing in her own bed, the thought of the poor man who was lying in the cold without any blanket smote her to the heart, and banished sleep from her eyes. The next morning she sent off a nun with a blanket to him, remarking apologetically, 'so that both of us may be able to sleep to-night.'

The sufferings of the poor were personal to her, as if they had been those of her own flesh and blood. The thought of them suffering from cold often prevented her enjoying the warmth of a fire, and she would keep away from it with a sense of satisfaction, sharing voluntarily the privation they were enduring from necessity. Many a time she arose from dinner, leaving her food almost untouched, and in answer to the inquiries of the Sisters whether she was ill, replied, 'No; but the thought of those poor creatures that I saw this

morning in their garret chokes it in my throat. I can't swallow a mouthful till I have taken them something.'

Her tenderness for the poor increased tenfold when sickness came and added its culminating trial to the hardships that already pressed upon them. She ran to their bedside, and only the strong sense of duty, calling her to more urgent claims, could induce her to leave them. Her heart drew her to the sick-room and held her there, and hurried her back again, as if the sufferer had been her own near kith and kin. Her anxiety about them became contagious, and not only the community, but her friends outside, were drawn into sympathy with her distress, until the miserable cellar, or the garret, or the bed in the *chambrée** where a dozen or more were huddled together, became the centre of widely diffused interest and kindness. She waylaid the doctors, and would so move them, that they would keep a rich patient waiting, or risk being late at a consultation, to go to one of her poor people, and would return and watch the case out of sheer pity for Sœur Rosalie. No wonder that she wrought real miracles amongst the poor, and that many an unforeseen recovery was attributed to her presence in

* A room let out in beds is called a *chambrée*.

the sick-room. She carried light and hope with her into the dark places, and such was the power of her maternal love, that her entrance often caused a sudden change in the moral condition of the seemingly dying person, which marked the crisis, and turned the scales from death to life. The confidence that 'Notre Mère' inspired throughout the entire Quartier Mouffetard was so boundless that they believed her capable of anything ; and if, now and then, they gave her credit for working a miracle, no one was inclined to gainsay them.

A lady whose help she had enlisted from one of the respectable quarters of the city came to her one day in an agony of distress. 'Ma Mère,' she said, 'our child is dying ! The doctors can do nothing. Come you and save him ! Come and pray over him !'

Sœur Rosalie in her humility cried out at the idea that her prayers could prevail where science and the prayers of a mother failed ; but yielding out of pity to the poor lady's entreaties, she went with her, and kneeling by the cradle where the child lay on the point of death, she sent up her heart in one of those prayers that take Heaven by storm, and wrest from God one of those answers that we call miracles. The child suddenly called

out, gave signs of consciousness, and in a few days was in full convalescence. He was destined after many a long year, as we shall see, to pay back his debt to Sœur Rosalie on an occasion which she little dreamed could ever have presented itself.

Her tenderness for the sick did not stop short when the extremity of illness was passed. As soon as they entered on the period of convalescence, which is often, for them, a time of greater suffering than that of the actual illness, she had a thousand little delicate cares for them; she would go about to borrow or beg a comfortable armchair, a warm dressing-gown, a curtain to shelter them from draughts or the light; if she received a present of fruit, or some sweetmeat, she would carry it off with childlike glee to her invalids, and enjoy their pleasure in partaking of the dainty as a mother might.

But nowhere did Sœur Rosalie's divine gift of sympathy shine out with such magnificent efficacy as when death approached, and there only remained to make ready for his summons, and prepare the victim for the last awful passage. Sœur Rosalie had many a hard fight for it with the dying soul against the devil, and there are innumerable instances of her having won triumphs that might be

indeed called miracles, miracles of God's grace and mercy ; there is no instance on record of her having been defeated, and compelled to go away sorrowful from one of these momentous battles. The door of the worst den in the faubourg opened to the priest when Sœur Rosalie led him there ; but it sometimes needed all her influence to make his ministry be accepted.

A man lay dying in dogged impiety. The priest had been by his bedside for a long time, striving in vain to move his sullen obstinacy ; but he persisted in saying that he did not want God—he did not believe in Him. At last the priest said, 'I will go for Sœur Rosalie.' 'Ah, I believe in her !' exclaimed the dying man, and the hard expression of his face relaxed.

Sœur Rosalie was sent for, and before she left him he had become as docile as a child, and was calling out humbly for the priest to come back. He made a good confession, and died in admirable sentiments of contrition and faith.

Another man, whose life had been a scandal even in that godless region, was stricken with a mortal illness. He had been notorious amongst the worst rioters during the Revolution, and many remembered seeing his hands dyed with blood from

the slaughter of *les aristos*. There was no depth of crime into which he had not plunged ; even his worst comrades feared him ; and now that he was dying, no one dared go near him. Sœur Rosalie, hearing how it was, went to him at once, and installed herself by his bedside, and nursed him with the devotion of a daughter, never speaking of his soul, but doing her utmost for his bodily sufferings, and circumventing him with her sweet wiles and ways, until by degrees, with an angelic tact that was all her own, she began to hint at the world that he was going to, where things were to be better than in this. He took no offence at first, but when she at last spoke of confession and M. le Curé, he grew savage, and bade her leave him. Instead of obeying, she went on her knees, and, with the tears streaming from her beautiful brown eyes, she prayed him to have pity on her, to spare her the life-long sorrow of seeing him die impenitent, till at last she so melted him by the eloquence of her burning charity that his hard eyes grew moist, and he told her to go and fetch the curé. He made his confession, in admirable dispositions, and afterwards told Sœur Rosalie that he owed his conversion to her prayers and to the compassion of the Blessed Virgin. He said

that one day, during the Terror, he had seen a batch of victims going to the guillotine, singing a hymn to the Queen of Martyrs. The words, made more striking by the circumstance, thrilled him strangely and impressed themselves on his memory, and ever after he felt impelled to recite the hymn daily, nor did he ever omit it throughout his long career of violence and vice. 'I could not help myself,' he said; 'something stronger than my will seemed to force me to say it every day.'

He repeated it with his dying breath, his eyes fixed on the crucifix that Sœur Rosalie held up to him.

The poor sometimes left her strange commissions when they were dying. The Faubourg St. Marceau is the central quarter of the rag and bone trade—the *chiffonniers*, who live by turning up dust-heaps all over the city. They are a race apart, and their chronicles furnish many a curious legend not devoid of a certain picturesque romance peculiar to the character of their trade and its surroundings. Some of them grow rich. One of these Fortunatuses, who was known to Sœur Rosalie by evil repute, was dying in a garret alone; he had driven away his wife, after treating her with brutal cruelty for years; the only living being in

whom he showed any human interest was his daughter, who had been to the Sisters' school. When he felt the hand of death upon him, he sent for Sœur Rosalie.

'Ma Mère,' he said, 'I am going to die, and I wish you to take the money I have saved for *la petite*, and keep it for her till she is old enough to take care of it herself.'

He pulled out from under his straw bed a parcel, which contained notes and gold to the amount of fifteen thousand francs. Sœur Rosalie explained to him that she could not take so serious a trust, and that he must give it to a notary, adding that she knew one, a friend of hers, who would receive it and take care of it for him. 'But before I go to fetch him,' she said, 'I must go for the priest, in order that you may receive the Sacraments, and die at peace with God.'

'Never mind the priest,' replied the rag-and-bone man confidently; 'whatever has to be done in that line, you can do it; you know more about God than M. le Curé, I'll be bound. Talk to me about Him, and I'll say any prayer you like.'

Sœur Rosalie had great difficulty in making him understand that this would not do, and that she was no more a priest than a notary. Finally,

they compromised it : she consented to take charge of the money, on condition that he let the priest come and see him. When he had made his confession, she went off in search of his wife, and the old man received her, and made her a tardy apology for his evil behaviour.

At the age of twenty-eight, Sœur Rosalie was named superioress of the house in the Rue de l'Epée de Bois, after ten years' service there. The members of the administration showed their personal satisfaction in the appointment by an attention which touched her deeply : they made her a present of a trousseau. The present was as unexpected as it was unprecedented, and the young superioress took such care of it, that at the time of her death, fifty years later, she was still wearing some of the articles of that trousseau.

The face of the wicked faubourg was gradually changing under her rule and influence, and if it was not growing beautiful, it was at least growing less hideous. The houses where she was in the habit of going, instinctively made an attempt, like their occupants, to 'clean themselves' in her honour. The denizens of the *chambrée*, who noticed that she lost her breath when the foul air of the place first seized her, making her cough, and some-

times forcing water from her eyes, took to opening the window, or the door, if it happened to be the only ventilator, so as to renew the atmosphere before her next visit.

Though the spectacle that met her daily in these *chambrées* was revolting to her refined delicacy, as well as harrowing to her sensitive heart, she never let the poor feel that she suffered personally from frequenting them. She would sit and talk to them with seemingly great pleasure in a loft with the roof sloping down so as to make it impossible to stand upright many steps beyond the entrance, and where some twelve or twenty human beings, huddled together on the floor at night, had poisoned the little air there was, and made it horrible to inhale. The rooms lower down were often not much better; for in proportion to their space they were still more densely peopled, the lodgers crowded together as closely as they could pack—men, women, and children—like so many beasts.

The sight of the children in those wretched abodes was above all pitiable. The healthier among them drew together and played at some of those games that childhood invents to cheat its own joylessness; the sickly ones sat on the floor, looking before them with that stupefied gaze which is the

expression of the worst of human woes, the absence of hope. Yet these represented the more fortunate of the little ones ; for they, at least, had a shelter, and were owned by some one. Outside these, there was a floating population of children who had neither homes nor families ; they sprang up no one saw whence, and grew up uncared for, feeding on what refuse they could pick up in the streets, or pilfer from stalls and the carts of itinerant vendors, sleeping at night under a bridge or a doorway like stray cats and dogs, but less independent than these to choose their lodging, for they were liable to be shaken up by the police and told to move on, or else, if he were a zealous official, to be marched off to the lock-up. The prisons of Paris are full of 'gaol-birds' whose first acquaintance with their dismal hospitality began in this way. The offspring of the lowest class of poor in the Faubourg St. Marceau graduated for the gaol and the hulks and the guillotine, just as the children of gentlemen graduate for the professions and the public service. It was no light thing to undertake the regeneration of such a race. They were little better than savages. Born of criminal and besotted parents, they inherited every moral and physical disease, and carried their evil inheritance in their

faces ; many of them looked more like animals than human beings with souls, and repelled every one who beheld them. But they never repelled Sœur Rosalie. Hers was the love of a mother ; and like a true mother, the more repulsive and ill-favoured the child, the more tenderly her heart yearned to it.

One of her first cares on coming to the faubourg had been to found a *crèche*. Here, the babies whose parents were compelled to leave them during the day while they went to their work were taken in. There was a great outcry at first that the *crèche* was going to encourage mothers to abandon their offspring, but Sœur Rosalie held on her way, and took in the babies, trusting to the mother's love—the one solitary love that God did not see necessary to enforce by a command or even guard by a counsel—to defend its own prerogative and justify her faith in it. And the mothers justified her. The babies were washed and better cared for because Sœur Rosalie would see them. It was one of her treats to go to the *crèche* of an afternoon and play with the babies. Her appearance was the signal for a general commotion ; there was crowing and cooing from the cradles ; the larger babies rolling on the floor or toddling about on

rickety legs, and clamouring to be kissed ; babies crying and wanting to be comforted. It was wonderful, the Sisters used to say, how the babies 'took to her.' One day she was passing by a cot where a little creature that had been picked up in the streets that morning sat sucking its thumb ; it was only there for the day, waiting to be taken to the Foundling Hospital ; but, on seeing Sœur Rosalie, it held out its small arms and began to cry, *Maman ! maman !* and when she took it up, it clung to her so that there was no getting it to let her go.

'You see, it calls me *mamma*,' she said at last ; 'how can I let it be sent away ? We must keep it here, poor little thing !' And so she did, and adopted it and watched over it like a true mother during the mercifully short space of its life.

She established infant schools with wonderful success. The municipality discovered that she had a genius for training children, and referred to her in all matters connected with the schools in the district. When it was proposed to open *internats*—schools where the children are lodged and boarded—Sœur Rosalie opposed the scheme on the ground that *internats* were not suited to a district where life was so hard and poverty so extreme. A wealthy benefactor offered to defray the expenses of an

internat ; but she replied, 'It is not the expense that deters me ; it is that I am convinced that the gentle rule of the Sisters would unfit the children for the rough life and hard ways that await them with their parents afterwards. It would disgust them with the people they are destined to live with, and make their homes unbearable to them.'

The effect of the day-school, on the contrary, was, she maintained, wholly beneficial. It did not unfit the children for the comfortless bed, the bare walls, the scant, coarse fare, the troublesome task of looking after the baby brother or sister. The children, moreover, carried home to their parents at night the lessons they had been taught in the day, and the parents became interested in what they learned, and by degrees fell unconsciously under the influence and direction of the Sisters themselves. Thus the children became little apostles in their homes ; the drunken father would keep sober on Sunday morning that he might go with 'la petite' to Mass, and the mother would wash herself and yield to the child's persistent assurance that the Sisters had promised that 'Mamma would take her to Mass when she was good.'

This was the education Sœur Rosalie aimed at chiefly. She cared very little for the book-learning

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the children acquired in the schools, compared with the moral effect of the training on themselves and their parents. The variety of claims that divided her time did not allow of her teaching personally in the classes ; but through her busiest years, when the care of the sick and the receiving of hundreds of persons in the afternoon, an enormous correspondence, and the government of the Community, made it a very miracle how she got through each day's work, she made a point of visiting the classes, and making the round of the desks, inspecting the work and the copy-books, and distributing rebuke and encouragement with that rare tact and *à propos* which acted better than punishment or reward on the children.

If she met a child in the street during school-hours, she inquired at once why it was not at school ; and if the fault lay with the parents, she went straight off to them, and pleaded for the child, sometimes in a tone of severity, which was never resented, and which seldom failed of the desired effect. If it happened that the child's absence arose from there being no vacant place in the school, she would take the little one by the hand, and, entering the class, say, 'It seems there is no room for this poor little thing. She is so

small, you might surely slip her in amongst you. *Voyons !* If you could squeeze her in somehow, it would make me very happy, my children.'

Immediately there was a general movement along the benches, and an assurance from every side that there was plenty of room.

The want of space in this first school induced Sœur Rosalie to collect money amongst her friends to open a second, which she did in the Rue du Banquier, and, thanks to her influence, the municipality of Paris consented to take charge of it, the classes being intrusted to the Sisters. An *ouvroir* was attached to it, where manual work of various kinds was also taught by the Sisters.

These ordinary duties of the Sister of Charity—schools, visitation of the sick and poor, &c., which so amply filled the life of Sœur Rosalie—did not suffice for her all-embracing sympathies and the inexhaustible zeal of her soul. The field of labour which demanded her exertions in the Quartier Mouffetard alone was enough to overpower a less vigorous mind, but her capacious heart stretched out its helpful sympathies far beyond it. We have seen that she came to the Rue de l'Épée de Bois a total stranger, not only in that district, but in Paris, yet it was not long before she had a larger acquaint-

ance than the most fashionable lady in the great city. It came to be known that a very remarkable woman was living in the Faubourg St. Marceau, and people went to make her acquaintance on one pretext or another, until soon Sœur Rosalie held a court that was more assiduously attended than that of any princess in Europe. Like a true princess, she exercised the royal prerogative of receiving visits without returning them; but the time she devoted to these receptions, and the amount of kindness, of active help and salutary consolation that flowed from them, form one of the most striking facts of her life.

When charity in its heavenly character of personal service of the poor, and tender realisation of their sufferings and participation in them, takes blessed possession of a soul, it is apt to become rather exclusive, to shut out other claims, to make us callous, for instance, to the sufferings of the rich as deserving no pity compared with those of the poor. Here again, love—a wider, more comprehensive and perfect love—must set the balance right, supplementing experience, and, if needs be, reaching even beyond its ken, and enabling us to see all things in their true proportions.

This was the grand, royal characteristic of Sœur

Rosalie's charity,—it knew no limitations ; wide as the sunlight, it took in all classes, it embraced every sorrow, every pain, every joy that a human creature can feel. The poor had undoubtedly the largest share in her heart ; but they never robbed the rich of theirs. ' Pray for the rich,' she would say to her Sisters ; ' they are more to be pitied than we think ; they have griefs and trials that the poor know nothing about. If the poor knew what those poor rich often have to suffer, they would not envy them as they do.'

She lost no opportunity of bringing home to the poor this truth, that the rich are not so enviably happy as they seem ; but she never preached it. Her knowledge of human nature and her experience of the realities of life taught her to avoid mocking the poor by that seeming fallacy. For it looks like a mockery to tell those whose lives are made wretched by the want of money, that riches do not constitute happiness ; they constitute the happiness that the poor can best understand : food and warmth and plenty, and peace of mind. The poor man can see only this bright side of the rich man's lot ; the canker that may lie beneath the brilliant outside is hidden from him, and unless the hearts of the poor are filled with the spirit of Christianity and thirst

for the happiness that it promises in another world, it is hard for them not to hate the rich. Sœur Rosalie, in her intercourse with the poor, was always on the watch to deprecate this hatred, and to disarm that fatal envy which is so general in France, and which breaks out periodically in the savage upheavings that we witness. But her pity for them did not make her less compassionate towards the sufferings of the rich. She was as ready to sympathise with the great ones of the earth as with the lowly. The parlour, where, like an uncrowned queen, she held her court every day for hours, saw people of the highest rank waiting patiently for their turn of audience: an ambassador sitting on his straw chair next to a rag-and-bone man, a duchess side by side with a charwoman, no one claiming precedence, but exemplifying unostentatiously that equality which the Revolution preaches, but which the Gospel alone puts in practice. The great lady and the beggar-woman met just the same welcome from Sœur Rosalie. She was often sorely tried by fine ladies who came to her with stories of their troubles, sentimental grievances where self and sin and vacuity of life were the chief factors; but her patience never failed; she would enter into them with an attentive kindness that gave her the right.

to counsel, to blame, to suggest remedies, sometimes even punishments. Nothing shocked her, and she never despaired of any one. No matter how sunk in selfishness, or worldliness, or folly a person might be, she always saw a green spot where the good seed might be dropped. This divine virtue of hope would seem, indeed, to have been often as powerful an agent with Sœur Rosalie as her burning charity in helping souls. She hoped so much of them, and so persistently, that they were ashamed to disappoint her. Her Sisters sometimes remonstrated with her on the time she 'lost' listening to the complainings of the rich worldlings who drove to the Rue de l'Épée de Bois to enjoy the luxury of her sympathy, and kept her occupied, while 'our poor' were waiting; but Sœur Rosalie would reply: 'The time I give them is not lost: you don't know what a comfort it often is to these poor rich to find a sympathetic listener! And besides, I turn their gratitude to account, and it makes friends of them for our poor. We can do no greater kindness to the rich than this: to make them do good; and there are numbers of them who would be so glad to help the poor, if they knew where to find them, and how to go about it.'

Sœur Rosalie had a rare talent for turning to

account persons of goodwill, both rich and poor. Indeed, had it not been for the number of auxiliaries that she thus secured on all sides, it would have been impossible for her to get through a tithe of the work she accomplished ; but the desire to oblige her was so universal that she never lacked helpers and commissioners. It was part of her creed of holy hope never to despair of a case, any more than of a soul, however desperate it seemed. When, during her long audiences, some one appeared whose case it was altogether beyond her power to deal with, she would never say no, but would send away the petitioner with a hopeful word, and, keeping the matter in her mind, wait till some influential person turned up during the afternoon—as was sure to happen—and then, after giving him the counsel or sympathy he needed, she would say, ‘And now I am going to ask a service at your hands. I shall be so grateful if you can help in a matter that I have at heart.’

Many a time the persons whose assistance she thus invoked came back to thank her for making them acquainted with a misery beside which their own trials grew utterly contemptible. Many a time some woman of the world, after rolling along in her softly-cushioned carriage to the convent-

door, and waiting impatiently to pour out her imaginary woes to the large-hearted Sister of Charity, left her presence to visit some sick mother and hungry children in a garret close by, and came back to give thanks for her own cure, humbly acknowledging that her trouble had been but that aching void which the world creates in a heart made for better things.

But it was not the idle ones only whom Sœur Rosalie requisitioned to the service of the poor: ambassadors, ministers, courtiers, military men, naval officers, railway directors, merchants, the heads of manufactories, men of science, artists, lawyers—she utilised them all. As a rule, the service was volunteered before she asked for it. After drawing largely on her wisdom or sympathy, the visitor would say, ‘And now, *ma Sœur*, is there nothing that I can do for you?’

Then out would come that capacious pocket-book that her friends knew well, and the man of goodwill was requested, with gracious alacrity, to draw up a petition, the heads of which were ready jotted down on a leaf of the pocket-book; or to write a letter to some official personage; or, if he chanced to be a lawyer, to make out a legal statement of some case that required technical wording.

She often had three secretaries employed in this way—all seized promiscuously, and kept hard at work, while the audiences went on all round. Nothing gratified her more than when some young workman who wrote a fair hand turned up at the same time, and consented to lend her his pen ; she would set him down near a gentleman, and make much of his kindness. She was grateful to any one who did her the least service, but to the poor more especially, and she would take occasion to thank them before others, making the very most of what they had done for her.

‘I am so grateful to you for writing that letter ! It just arrived in time, thanks to you, and the poor mother will bless you all her life !’ she would say to some poor man, whose self-respect was raised by this public tribute from *notre Mère*. But for these numerous recruits who lent her their services Sœur Rosalie could never have got through a correspondence which extended to every part of the world. A young man whom she kept busy one day as a secretary counted five hundred visitors in the parlour during the day, and she was still receiving when he left.

She took a special interest in educated persons who were trying to gain their livelihood. Perhaps

no one ever found more situations and lessons for governesses and professors of every sort than Sœur Rosalie. She always had a number of servants to place, of workmen to get situations for ; and it was one of her arguments in defence of the time she lost with worldly people, that they brought her all these opportunities, and provided for her *protégés* without giving her the trouble of going about it herself.

As years went on, she came to exercise a sort of sovereignty in the domain of charity, and nothing was done in Paris without her counsel, or left undone that she set her heart on. Her protection extended to every part of France, and even beyond it ; but Paris was especially her tributary, and kept her charitable coffers filled as fast as they were emptied. Parisians took foreign visitors to see Sœur Rosalie as one of their most remarkable personages, and enlisted their generosity in behalf of her good works. Many a gift was left at the Rue de l'Épée de Bois by some wealthy stranger, who, after revelling in the splendours and amusements of the brilliant capital, was taken to see that other city that lay on its outskirts—a hideous and perilous growth of our imperfect civilisation.

Sœur Rosalie's little parlour witnessed many a

strange and touching scene, heard many a confession, beautiful and sad. One day a father came to implore her help to make up a quarrel with his son, and was weeping bitterly as he told the story, when the son came in, bent on the same errand. Neither of them knew the peacemaker except by name.

A mother came to her once with a tale of sorrow and sin too bad to be confided to less divinely pitiful ears, and entreated her assistance in discovering a daughter who had fled from home. Before the day was over, the daughter found her way to the little parlour to seek Sœur Rosalie's good offices in reconciling her to her mother.

Families of every rank took her for the *confidante* of their most private griefs and difficulties. The amount of correspondence which this part of her mission alone brought on Sœur Rosalie was enormous. One who had experienced their efficacy through a great sorrow said, 'Her letters of consolation are like pages from Bossuet.' She never grudged the time these letters cost her, but would write often and at much length when she saw that her sympathy or counsel was of use. The following extract from one of her letters, to the family

of a young man whose evil courses were inclining them to extreme severity, shows how wise, as well as tender, her charity was :

‘What you tell me of the conduct of — afflicts me deeply. It is awful to see vice carried to such an excess ; and yet — is not bad at heart. You must not be too hard on the poor fellow ; he is as much to be pitied as blamed ; and you know as well as I do that hard words and severity, even when deserved, seldom succeed with men. Gentle persuasion—an appeal to the past, its pure and good memories—touches a heart not entirely hardened. . . . God has reserved for Himself anger and justice ; pity and prayer are our portion. If you could but bring him to shed one tear by speaking to him of his mother and the innocent days of his childhood, you would have made a great step towards his conversion. Keep me *au courant*, I entreat you, of whatever God does for him through your means, and may He shed upon us all His spirit of love and persuasion and peace !’

Yet she could be inflexibly firm where convinced that severity was necessary. A young man from the provinces brought her a letter of introduction. She took a lively interest in him, and

watched over him like a mother. He had not been long in Paris when it came to her ears that he had committed a grave fault. Sœur Rosalie sent for him, and said, 'If this happens again, you must leave Paris immediately.' It did happen again, not long after, and the young man was summoned to the Rue de l'Épée de Bois.

'Monsieur,' said Sœur Rosalie when he appeared in the presence chamber, 'there is a situation waiting for you at Constantinople. Here is your passport. You have just time to pack up and leave Paris to-night.'

He begged a few days' delay to write to his family ; but Sœur Rosalie had already communicated with them, and taken all the necessary steps to facilitate his immediate departure, and so great was her ascendancy over her young *protégé* that he never dreamed of disobeying her, but left Paris for the East that night.

A young artisan, on coming to Paris, went to Sœur Rosalie, introduced by a friend. She found him an excellent situation ; but, mistrusting his youth and high spirits, she stipulated that he should bring her regularly every week a certain sum out of his salary, which she was to remit to his parents. He consented to the arrangement,

and kept to the engagement punctually during the years that he remained in Paris.

Sœur Rosalie was equally ready to help those whose difficulties were on a larger scale, and less likely to touch one who saw so much of the cruel extremities of poverty. The head of a large house of business was absent on a journey when a bill for a considerable sum was presented, and there was no money to pay it. His wife, after applying in vain to all her husband's friends, in despair went to Sœur Rosalie merely to get sympathy in her distress. To her amazement, Sœur Rosalie offered to lend her the money out of her own purse.

Perhaps her ingenious charity was nowhere more admirably displayed than in her intercourse with that class called *les pauvres honteux*, the poor who are ashamed to beg. This class is, perhaps, more numerous in France than in other countries, owing to the frequent revolutions and changes of government that throw out of employment many whose livelihood depends on situations in government offices and the public service generally. The uncertain tenure of these situations, instead of driving educated men into the liberal professions or trade, would seem to have a contrary effect, for in no other country is there such an eager demand

for government places. The consequence is that the social wrecks after every revolution are more numerous than would seem credible to those unacquainted with the state of society in France, where a man in receipt of a good salary under government may be thrown penniless on the world to-morrow, and plunged with his family into absolute want. The comparatively low rents of the Faubourg St. Marceau attracted many of these victims of the revolutions of 1830 and 1848; moreover, they were safe here from the humiliations that would have embittered their position in the quarters where they were known; however poor they might be, there were deeper depths of poverty all around them. Sœur Rosalie's compassion for this class of sufferers knew no bounds. She found them out no matter how carefully they hid themselves, and had a variety of devices for helping without wounding them. When some wealthy family sent her a cast-off wardrobe of good clothes, she would select what was suitable, and send word to the father or brother, as it might be, that she wanted to see him; when he appeared in the parlour she would call out before everybody present, 'Ah, my good Monsieur X——! you will do me a little service while you are waiting, I am sure?

It is to take this bundle for me. Here is the address. I shall be so much obliged to you!' On looking at the address, the commissioner found it was his own.

The family of a bankrupt merchant took refuge in one of the most wretched houses of the faubourg, and were on the verge of starvation when Sœur Rosalie found them out ; but not liking to intrude upon them brusquely, she contrived to supply them with food and money for a long time without letting them know whence the help came. She would take some rich woman of the world sometimes to a family of this kind, and induce her to undertake the education of the children, so that they might regain in time the position to which they had been born.

Sœur Rosalie's shrewd worldly wisdom and strong common sense acted as a balance to her character, and prevented her from being carried away by the warmth of her compassion, which never degenerated into foolish softness ; her heart never ran away with her head, but the two worked together in harmonious concert. Love of almsgiving never hurried her into forgetfulness of more obvious claims, and many a fine lady, on offering her money for the poor, was startled by the blunt

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inquiry as to whether she had paid her milliner's bills. 'Because,' Sœur Rosalie would remark, 'the payment of debts comes before almsgiving; you must give to the poor out of what is your own, not out of what you owe to others.'

She was equally firm in checking the injudicious zeal of those who thought they had vocations for the religious life. A young heiress, whose family strongly opposed her vocation to a cloistered order, determined to run away from home, and confided this resolution to Sœur Rosalie. To her dismay, the wise religious snubbed it emphatically. 'What is it you want to do?' she demanded; 'to sacrifice yourself to God? Well begin by sacrificing your own will to Him. Sacrifice yourself by submitting to an authority which, even when it errs, it is your duty to respect.'

This stern discretion which she exercised in the matter of vocations was the more admirable on account of her natural impulse to foster and encourage them. There was scarcely an order in France to which she had not sent recruits. The number of those for whom she opened the door of the religious life by obtaining money for their education and afterwards for their trousseaux and dowries was one of the wonders of her capacious

charity and far-reaching influence. Her own convent was open to exiled nuns from Poland, and when her slender resources did not suffice to help them, she begged for them all they needed. She received the Little Sisters of the Poor into her neighbourhood like the heaven-sent angels they are, and went round from door to door begging for them the dregs and scraps on which they feed when their aged guests are served ; she levied contributions for them in the schools and convents, and gave them, from her own limited store, mattresses, and the pots and pans they needed for their simple cooking, and when they were thus far installed, she presented them with their first old man.

Sœur Rosalie's reverence for all religious orders and communities was universal as her charity; dearly as she loved her own Sisterhood, she never extolled it as more perfect or higher than any other ; on the contrary, she spoke of the Daughters of St. Vincent as the servants of all, and her love of silence and prayer sometimes led her to speak of the contemplative orders with a yearning admiration that surprised those who saw how fully the active service seemed to satisfy her heart.

The daily life of a Sister of Charity affords

ample scope for zeal and self-devotion ; but now and then some special appeal is made to her powers of self-sacrifice which reveals them in a new aspect. The terrible winter of 1829-30, one of those immediate causes of the Revolution which was to send Charles X. into exile, put a heavy strain on Sœur Rosalie's forces. Her sagacious instinct taught her to dread those extra trials which add to the inevitable privations of the poor that degree of suffering which reaches the unbearable, and, by exhausting their powers of endurance, drives them into open rebellion against God and man. It was this feeling which made one of her Sisters say, 'I fear the devil, but I fear the coming winter much more.' When it came, Sœur Rosalie multiplied herself and her community in order to stand between the poor and its bitter severity.

She worked and begged for them, and gave them to the last farthing of her resources. One day, when she had nothing more to give, she took off her one flannel petticoat to cover a shivering woman at the convent-gate. The act was discovered, betrayed by its consequences to her own health ; but Sœur Rosalie checked the remonstrance of her Sisters with, 'Hush, my children ; I gave it to the Mother of our Lord when I saw

her hungry and perishing. We, at least, can make a fire and warm ourselves.'

The winter passed ; but the people, waking from the torpor of cold and hunger, broke out into madness. With the summer came the Revolution. The ascendancy which Sœur Rosalie had gained over the inhabitants of the ill-famed faubourg was marvellously manifested during this saturnalia of 1830. She had by her service of love earned the right to command them, and it is to the honour of our common nature that they remembered it in the worst hour of their frenzy, and listened to the voice of 'our Mother' when no other could make itself heard above the storm. She went out into their midst like a mother who knows she has nothing to fear from sons quarrelling amongst themselves, or waging war against their enemies. At her bidding, more than one barricade was stopped in process of erection, and the paving-stones laid back into their places. When the way was barred to the police and to armed authority, it opened before her, and the barriers fell to let her pass. If she saw men forcing others to mount the barricades against their will, she would go forward and order them to desist, laying her hand on their arm, and addressing them in a tone of authority ;

and no one was ever known to resent the firm and loving touch, or challenge her right to interfere.

While the frenzy of the populace lasted, no priest might show himself abroad without danger. Many fled to the Convent of the Rue de l'Epée de Bois for safety, and Sœur Rosalie took them in and hid them, reckless of the risk she was running. One of the rioters, to whom she offered a bread-ticket, replied : ' We don't want any more of them, Mother. We are going to pillage the Archbishop's palace to-morrow.' And these same men, who sacked Monseigneur de Quélen's palace, constituted themselves into a guard of honour to protect their Mother's convent and that of a community whom she desired them to take care of, and whose house some ruffians had threatened to burn down.

When the insurrection was over, and the work of dealing out justice to its agents began, she took the side of the guilty ones, as she had done that of their victims. She hid the men who had been fighting on the barricades, just as she had hidden the priests who fled from them. Prices were put on the heads of several, and Sœur Rosalie helped them to fly from France. She tricked the police, sometimes putting them on a wrong scent, so as to

leave the pursued man time to make good his escape. At last her misbehaviour came to the ears of authority ; she was denounced as conniving with the late rebels and defying the Government. M. Gisquet, the Prefect of Police, signed a warrant for her arrest, and ordered his chief coadjutor to have it executed without delay.

‘Monsieur,’ replied that officer, ‘I dare not do it. The whole faubourg would rise to a man if a finger were laid on Sœur Rosalie.’

‘She seems to be a very powerful person, this Sœur Rosalie,’ said the Prefect ; ‘I have a mind to go and see her.’

He ordered his carriage, and drove straight to the Rue de l’Epée de Bois, where he found the small room next to the parlour filled to overflowing, as usual. He made his way through the crowd, and, without giving his name, asked to see the superioress at once, on urgent business. Sœur Rosalie came to the door, politely begged him to wait until she had finished with a poor woman, whom she could not dismiss without a hearing. The time seemed long to the impatient functionary until the door opened again, and Sœur Rosalie graciously invited him in, and inquired what she could do to serve him.

‘Madame,’ replied M. Gisquet, ‘I am not come to ask any service at your hands, but, perhaps, to render you one. I am the Prefect of Police.’

Sœur Rosalie received the announcement with perfect equanimity and redoubled graciousness.

‘Do you know,’ continued M. Gisquet, ‘that you are very seriously compromised? You assisted, some days ago, in the escape of a man who by openly rebelling against the Government deserved the severest penalty. I had signed a warrant for your arrest, but, at the entreaty of one of my subalterns, I suspended its execution, and now I am come to ask you how and why it is that you dare thus to defy the law.’

‘Monsieur le Préfet,’ replied Sœur Rosalie, looking at him with fearless candour, ‘I will tell you why: I am a Sister of Charity, and I know no law but Charity; I must help everybody who wants help; it is my duty to do what I can for them without judging them; and I promise you, moreover, that if you ever get into trouble, and are running away from the police, and come to me to help you, I will do it.’

The coolness of this was too much for the gravity of the State magistrate. He burst out laughing, and then they entered into a conversa-

tion which soon grew confidential. Sœur Rosalie was not to be frightened or persuaded ; she endeavoured to make the magistrate see that she was right and he wrong ; that it was quite as much her duty to save the rebels from the penalty of the law as it was his to enforce it, and that she was bound by her vow of charity to be always on the side of the unfortunate, whether they were guilty or not.

M. Gisquet was fascinated and disarmed. ‘ Well, *ma Sœur*,’ he said, ‘ I will shut my eyes on the past ; but, I beg of you, don’t begin again : it would be too painful for us to be obliged to proceed against you.’

‘ Monsieur le Préfet,’ replied Sœur Rosalie, accompanying him to the door, ‘ I can make you no promises ; I feel that if the temptation presented itself again, I should not have the courage to resist it. You see, a daughter of St. Vincent de Paule has no right to withstand an appeal to her charity, let the consequences be what they may.’

This appeal to the generous human sympathies of the magistrate was unanswerable ; he took leave of her, declaring she was incorrigible and irresistible.

Incorrigible she certainly was, and not many

days after this visit she proved it. A Vendean leader, whom the Government was keeping a sharp look-out for, came to ask her help to escape ; she hid him in the convent, and then got him a disguise, and sent him off under cover of the night. A friend of his, whom the police were also on the watch for, came to see her some days later, to tell her that her *protégé* was safe. It so happened that, when this gentleman entered the room, the Commissary of Police was with Sœur Rosalie, trying to get information that might lead to his discovery. Without losing her presence of mind, Sœur Rosalie managed to make a sign to the new-comer, warning him of the danger, and she kept the Commissary talking for over an hour, exercising her brilliant conversational powers so successfully that he forgot the time, and had nearly forgotten the purport of his visit when it came to an end. Somehow, the truth got out, and the next day the Commissary arrived very angry, declaring that he would report to the Prefect the trick she had played him.

‘No, you won’t, Monsieur,’ replied Sœur Rosalie, ‘because you know that I should have done just the same for you. Indeed, I felt that I was doing you a service as well as M. —, and sparing you

the trouble and the pain of arresting him. Now, own that in your heart you are obliged to me?’

Her offers of protection to the representatives of the law were no vain mockery, as she once had occasion to prove. One of the police agents had, in the execution of some measure of authority, roused the anger of the district ; a crowd of roughs assembled before his house and clamoured for him to appear, threatening violence. The agent be-thought him of sending for Sœur Rosalie. She hurried to the spot, scolded the rioters for their unseemly conduct in neglecting their work to get up a row, and sent them to the right-about. They dispersed like chidden children, and the Commissary was never molested again.

Scarcely had the havoc made by the Revolution begun to be repaired, when another calamity bore down upon the Faubourg St. Marceau. The cholera, after devastating Eastern Europe, was marching steadily towards France.

Sœur Rosalie, when first the announcement reached her through public rumour, expressed a degree of alarm that surprised those who were acquainted with her courage, and accustomed to see her buoyant energy rise instinctively to meet every trouble. As the ghastly visitor drew nearer, her

alarm increased, and when it became known that the cholera was close to the gates of Paris she was like one paralysed by fear. Her Sisters, accustomed to lean on her for support, and to look to her clear, cool head for guidance, were dismayed at this faint-heartedness, which Sœur Rosalie made no attempt to disguise. She confessed that she trembled for them, for the poverty-stricken people whose sufferings they were going to witness and to share, and—she owned it with unabashed simplicity—she trembled for herself. Her soul was disquieted within her; she became a prey to overwhelming apprehensions, and could only cry out to God to save her when the hour came. It came at last, and then a wonderful thing happened. The moment the cholera appeared in the Faubourg St. Marceau, Sœur Rosalie's fears vanished. It was as if the Angel of Gethsemani had come and given her to drink of the chalice of strength; her courage rose, and never again faltered once while the pestilence lasted.

It is an idiosyncrasy of the French people that when a calamity, external or internal, befalls the nation, they instinctively attribute it to treachery or malice, or some malignant cause outside themselves. The Government is generally the scape-

goat on whom the accusation falls. In the present instance, the doctors divided the odium with it; they were accused of being in league with the State to punish the people for the late Revolution, by poisoning the water and certain elementary materials of food, and thus bringing on the cholera. The fact that half Europe had been already devastated by the scourge proved nothing in the eyes of the infatuated population. In Paris several apothecaries' shops were attacked, and the owners obliged to fly for their lives. Medical men became a mark for the popular vengeance, and were molested in the most respectable thoroughfares of the city.

Sœur Rosalie's influence and authority kept this dangerous panic within bounds in her own unruly faubourg, and reached sometimes with salutary effect beyond it. The celebrated Royer Collard was hurrying on to the nearest hospital by the side of a man who had been struck down with cholera in the street, when some one recognised him. In a moment a crowd had assembled and followed on, crying out: 'Away with the murderer! To the river with the poisoner!' A woman flung a knife at him, and this was the signal for a general onslaught. The doctor threw back the coverlet from the stretcher, and, showing the patient in the

agonies of cholera, told them he was going with the poor man to try and save him. This only excited their fury the more ; they laid hands on M. Collard, and were dragging him away to the river, when he had the happy inspiration to say : ' I am a friend of Sœur Rosalie's !'

' Ah, that is different !' they cried, and let him go, and quietly dispersed.

The plague, as had been anticipated, raged with special fury in the Faubourg St. Marceau. In the parish of St. Médard alone there were one hundred and fifty deaths a day. Sœur Rosalie and her Sisters worked during this awful crisis with untiring energy of love. For one week they never undressed, never sat down to a meal, and never went to bed. When sleep and fatigue overpowered them, they dropped down where they stood, slept for a few minutes, only to be aroused again to go to some dying person who was calling for them. Sœur Rosalie, so timid and faint-hearted before the pestilence appeared, was transformed amidst the scenes of horror that were going on around her. She cheered on her Sisters ; her serenity never flagged ; her care and thoughtfulness for them never deserted her for a moment. It is not surprising that they looked to her as to an angel with power to shield

them from the plague, and that they attributed their preservation to her prayers and protecting presence. The stricken population clung to her with the trust of love and the egotism of terror. Torn to pieces as she was, her great motherful heart never wearied, never thought of rest. It is related how once, after helping a sufferer through the last pangs of an awful death-struggle, she dropped down from sheer exhaustion by the dead woman's side, and was roused from her momentary swoon—it could hardly be called sleep—by the cry of the little newly-made orphan, pulling at her sleeve.

This voice of the little ones crying to her for help was the keenest goad that could have been applied to Sœur Rosalie's fainting powers, and when the visitation was over, their fate became her chief preoccupation. Children and the aged, it used to be said, were her predominant passion, and she left behind her enduring monuments of her care for both. She founded a *crèche* for babies, an *atelier* for young girls, another for boys, an asylum for old men and women, with an infirmary attached. She created them all out of nothing, as far as visible material means went; her sole resource was the bank of charity, but the unlimited cheques which she drew on it were never dishonoured.

The face of the faubourg was changing under her government ; poverty still held its sway there, but it had lost its worst characteristics, the inhabitants no longer felt themselves the forsaken pariahs they once were ; they now had a friend in the midst of them who took an interest in their lives, and whose power to help them seemed as unlimited as her will. There was nothing "our Mother" could not do, according to them. "She has a long arm," the rough men were fond of saying, and they went to her for the most unlikely services. She would sometimes laugh at these proofs of their faith in her arm's length, but she never rebuffed them, and seldom disappointed them.

A carter, a friend of hers in the neighbourhood, lost his horse ; the poor animal had died from old age. The man was in despair, for he had no means of buying another, so he went to Sœur Rosalie. 'Mother,' he said, 'if you don't get me a horse I am a ruined man.'

Sœur Rosalie took her umbrella, and went straight off to an ambassador, whom she had made great friends with, and told him she wanted a horse. He led her to his stables, and bade her choose the one she liked best ; she selected a valuable thoroughbred riding-horse, and a groom

was sent on with it to the Rue de l'Epée de Bois.

Her goodness to the poor was not limited to helping their necessities ; she loved them with that personal fondness which alone wins back their love. She took their part ; she was touchy if they were attacked or criticised, and she was impatient of hearing them lectured. It sometimes looked as if this sympathetic touchiness led her away from strict common sense. A poor woman who was almost starving was given a ring to sell and get herself food ; but the feminine love of finery was so strong in the poor soul that, despite the pangs of hunger, she kept the ring two days for the pleasure of wearing it. This folly was denounced to Sœur Rosalie. Instead of bearing down on the culprit, Sœur Rosalie began at once to excuse her : 'Poor creature ! how silly ! But I daresay it is the first time in her life she ever had a pleasure, and very likely it will be the last. Don't let us be too hard on her.'

Once, while the Sisters were at dinner, a thief stole into the parlour, and carried off a sum of money from the drawer of Sœur Rosalie's table. The robbery caused great indignation all over the faubourg where it was looked upon as little short of

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sacrilege, and every one was loud in calling down the penalty of the law on the thief; 'but,' said Sœur Rosalie, in relating the incident some months afterwards, 'luckily the poor man was never caught!' She constantly impressed on her Sisters that they should be infinitely indulgent to the faults, even the wrong-doings, of the poor. 'O my children, don't be hard on them,' she would say; 'don't be so ready to blame them. The world is quick enough to do that; it is always down on them. The poor, according to it, have every vice: they are lazy, they are liars, they are cowardly and ungrateful. Never give in to this way of judging them. Hate vice, but love the poor.'

She reminded them constantly of the immense disadvantages which the poor had to contend with on all sides. 'I wonder,' she would say, 'if we were put to the same trials, whether we should come out of them as well? If we had grown up without any Christian teaching, we should probably not be nearly as good as they are. Virtue comes easy to us, because in nine cases out of ten its practice involves no sacrifice; but with the poor it is quite different: they have to resist not merely the pleasure of doing wrong, but the need that is driving them to it.'

We complain of being so often disappointed in the poor. We forget how often the poor are disappointed in us, not merely in those material gifts, their expectations of which, in ignorance of the claims that limit them, may be sometimes unreasonable, but in those gifts of sympathy, compassion, reverence for the mystery of their condition, which need have no limitation but for the narrowness of our own hearts. Our self-love may be sometimes disappointed in the measure of thanks which the poor bestow upon us ; but they seldom disappoint us in the richer return of example and encouragement. We go to visit them, clad in comfort, our hands in soft furs, and we sit down in their wretched tenements, and assure them of the blessedness of their miserable lot ; and they listen to us with the courtesy of angels and the patience of martyrs, and they take our good words and our dole of bread with thanks, and give us in return a blessing, and an example of Christ-like meekness, humility, and faith.

Even that spirit of envy which works such terrible ruin in France, and so disheartens those who come to the service of the poor with the most genuine charity, found a word of excuse from Sœur Rosalie ; she was prone to turn on the virtuous

rich, and bid them beware how they made themselves answerable before God for provoking this deadly sin of envy in the poor by the arrogance of their bearing, their egotistical indifference, and their extravagant self-indulgence. For it is not necessary to do people an injury in order to provoke their hatred; even when trying to serve them we may do this, by the haughtiness of our manner, and that air of condescension which borders so closely on rudeness. In poverty the soul needs, above all, the alms of respect, without which our material alms are but bitterness and insult. The world, as a rule, withholds this sweet salve of humility from its bounties to the poor, and Sœur Rosalie was bold in warning good people of this flaw in their charity.

‘Take care!’ she would tell them; ‘God will hold us responsible for many of those sins of the poor that we are so ready to throw at their heads. Much of their revolt and bad feeling towards society may be laid at our door. In proportion as we are above them in intelligence, in fortune, in position, they should find us gentler, humbler, more affectionate, and more obliging.’

We of the educated classes, however sincerely we may commiserate the sufferings of the poor, find it difficult to stretch our sympathies to their

interests, their pleasures, their ambitions ; the lives of those fellow-creatures who live in slums and back alleys are, in their details, so sordid and vulgar, and lie so far outside our own experiences, that we are, in a sense, as remote from them as if they were the inhabitants of another planet. Charity can alone throw down these barriers, and, detaching us from the world and our own prejudices, bring us into those tender personal relations with the poor which engender the fellow-feeling that 'makes us wondrous kind.'

Sœur Rosalie's relations with them were of this familiar kind that enabled her to realise every detail and circumstance of their lives, and enter into the feelings, the sympathies, and the heart-hungers of the most wretched. 'Why should they not have their pleasures, too?' she would say ; 'and why should we be so amazed and scandalised, if sometimes they snatch at them at the expense of prudence ?'

It is easier to ask why than to answer it. We exact too much from the poor, as if they had no right to expect any pleasure, any respite from the appointed hardness of their lot. We forget that the child of a beggar longs for a lollipop or a toy, and the poor lad for a drive on the top of a 'bus,' and

the jaded man and over-worked woman for an hour in merry company, or a trip into the green fields, just as naturally and as irresistibly as we long for the more refined and expensive pleasures that we take without always looking too closely into our right to them.

It was one of Sœur Rosalie's sins of self-indulgence to provide these treats now and then for the heavily-laden ones. When the burden, from one cause or another, pressed more cruelly than usual on a poor family, she would contrive to send them out to the country for a day, asserting that the momentary break in the dull round of their toilsome lives was a help to their souls as much as a refreshment to their bodies.

The love of the country is so strong in the Parisians that, for the pleasure of smelling a lilac-tree and hearing a bird sing on the bush, they will walk beyond the city for miles under a burning sun, and squat on the grass to eat a scanty meal, and come home more dead than alive, convinced that they have enjoyed a day's pleasuring. Nor must we fancy it has been too dearly paid for. Amidst the ugliness that surrounds their lives, the poor are apt to forget there is any beauty in the world; and nothing, as we all know, so lifts the

heart to God as a glimpse of this beauty that He has so lavishly spread out for us, or so rests our over-strained faculties as the beauty of the quiet woods and fields.

Sœur Rosalie, who herself so needed this occasional rest by the way, could never be persuaded to take it. Her Sisters often tried, on one pretext or another, to make her take the relaxation of a day in the country ; but for fifty years they tried in vain. At last, one morning, she consented to make a *partie de campagne*, which consisted in crossing the courtyard, and mounting and descending a double flight of stone steps that led to the garden of the Maison de Secours attached to the convent, and gathering some dozen of pears from a tree which formed the chief glory of the garden. The Sister, who had long been trying to induce 'our Mother' to take this excursion, had got her as far as the top of the stone stair, when a ring sounded at the gate.

'I will be with you in a moment, Mother,' she said, hurrying away to admit the visitor.

'No, no,' replied Sœur Rosalie, turning to go with her ; 'our Lord is calling me back. You see He does not approve of my quitting my post to go pleasuring.'

She went to receive the new-comer, and never again tried to make a trip to the country.

In this, as in most things, severity to herself was the measure of her indulgence to others. She would brave public opinion, its ridicule and its censure alike, not merely to render a service, but to procure a pleasure, a little passing satisfaction to the poorest beggar. Whatever germs of vanity lurked in that humble heart took the form of a desire to make herself personally agreeable to the poor ; and it was one of her grievances against the rich—the good benevolent rich—that they take so little pains to do this ; that they show their real characters to the poor, without any of that restraining courtesy which checks brusqueness or impatience in company with their equals. Sœur Rosalie had a natural charm of manner which few could resist ; she pleased without the least attempt to do so ; but in her intercourse with the poor she laid herself out to be charming, to amuse them, to make them laugh ; and if she was accessible to flattery of any sort, it was to a compliment in this direction, to hear that some beggar-woman or some ill-conditioned rough had spoken of her with admiration, as pleasant or sympathetic.

The soup-kitchen, established by the Govern-

ment under Sœur Rosalie's direction in the convent, was one of her grand opportunities for paying court to the poor. She enjoyed few things more than to escape from a crowd of visitors of a very different class, and go to serve out their portions to the poor people. She would spend hours there in conversation with the men who came for their plate of rice or beans, and by the charm of her manner often won them to confide to her, almost unawares, some secret of moral or physical misery worse than the hunger they had come to assuage.

This ceremony of serving out the soup, &c., reminded many who assisted at it in the Rue de l'Epée de Bois of the repasts of the early Christians, and Sœur Rosalie would convene her Sisters to it as a recompense and a relaxation. Before entering the room, she would say, 'Let us salute the angels who are conducting the poor, and God who resides in them.'

The famine which visited France in the winter of 1847 was an awful experience for those who were in the service of the poor. The stagnation of trade brought about the *chômage*, that terrible stand-still that is the certain prelude of a popular storm. The bread-winners of the Faubourg St. Marceau were thrown at once into the direst want ;

starving men took refuge in the public-houses, and strove to drown their misery in drink and that fiery rhetoric which is more intoxicating to the French *ouvrier* than alcohol. As usual, the famine, the *chômage*, all the evils they wrought, were laid at the door of the Government. Wild theories of reform, that were to insure plentiful meals to every hungry citizen, were propounded ; savage threats were uttered against the existing state of things, and the men went back to their wretched homes drunk with their own eloquence as much as with the poisonous drugs served out to them.

Sœur Rosalie's experience and shrewd sense warned her where this sort of thing was going to end. She called up all the resources of her heart and head to fight against the hunger that was exasperating the poverty-stricken population. She begged, and set her friends to beg in every direction, and for a time succeeded in keeping the demon at bay. The famine was felt more severely by the population of this district than any other, and yet it was not from the Faubourg St. Marceau that the signal for revolution sounded. Sœur Rosalie, who always stood up for 'our faubourg,' made a point of this fact in its favour, and would declare that it was better than its reputation.

‘Besides,’ she was wont to add, ‘we are so wretched, and have so much to suffer in the best of times, that people ought not to be hard on us. I am sure Almighty God will not.’

When, finally, ‘our faubourg’ did catch fire and join in the Revolution, the dismay and terror in the convent were great. Sœur Rosalie alone never lost heart, but cheered up her frightened Sisters.

‘O Mother!’ they exclaimed, remembering 1830, ‘how wicked they are going to be!’

But she answered gaily, ‘And how good we are going to be!’

And yet, when the paving-stones were torn up, and barricades rose, and the murderous faces of men gone mad with passion were visible everywhere around her, her heart sank. She was so struck by the sinister horror of the scene, the fierce looks and bearing of the rioters, their brutal threats as they bullied and dragged reluctant comrades to the bloody work in hand, that she said afterwards in describing it, ‘I believe if we had gone to hell that day, we should not have found a single devil there; they were all above ground in the streets of Paris. Never shall I forget their faces.’

The horror with which the ‘devils’ inspired her did not, however, prevent her devoting herself to

them as heroically and tenderly as if they had been angels. She was in the midst of them all day long, dressing their wounds, receiving them into the convent, braving death to go and assist them out in the streets, praying by the side of the dying, and helping them to make their peace with God, while the bullets rained about the crucifix that she held up before their closing eyes. She, who was by nature so timid and sensitive, and used formerly almost to faint at the sight of a wound, seemed to have lost all sensibility as well as all fear, so little did she mind the bloodshed, so recklessly did she brave the danger. It was characteristic of the people she thus trusted that not once through the murderous frenzy of those days did any of them forget what was due to her and to her Sisters. Not a rude word was spoken to them, not a shot was fired nor a stone thrown at the convent. Stranger still, the rioters were seen to lower their muskets and suspend the work of slaughter to assist Sœur Rosalie or one of her companions across a barricade, or to facilitate their approach to some wounded comrade.

One day, when the battle was at its hottest, an officer of the Garde Mobile led his men to attack a barricade in the Rue Mouffetard, at the corner

of the Rue de l'Épée de Bois. He himself mounted first to the assault, and his men were following him, when a murderous volley from the insurgents made them fall back, and the officer found himself on the other side of the barricade, alone, surrounded by the enemy, with certain death staring him in the face. He turned suddenly, and made for the Rue de l'Épée de Bois, and, seeing the convent-gate open, rushed in, and fell into the midst of the Sisters who were coming and going amongst the wounded in the courtyard. Sœur Rosalie, seizing the situation at a glance, thrust him into a doorway behind her, and, standing forward with her Sisters, made a barrier between him and his pursuers, who came rushing after him, yelling like madmen. At the sight of the rampart of white cornettes that stood between them and their victim they were staggered for a moment, and, falling back, begged Sœur Rosalie to stand aside and let the assassin of the people come out. Even at this crisis they did not forget what they owed 'our Mother,' and it was a strange medley to hear their threats and blasphemies addressed to the officer, alternating with terms of respect and endearment to her.

'Come, now, *bonne Mère*, let go that hell-hound.'
'We love you well, Mother; but you must give up

that devil.' 'You are our good angel ; we won't touch one of the cornettes, but by —— we will have his blood !'

But Sœur Rosalie and her angel guard held to their ranks, stoutly expostulating with the infuriated rioters.

'No, no ; we must have his life !' they cried. 'He has been butchering our kith and kin for days, and now his turn has come !'

'What !' cried Sœur Rosalie, 'you would stain these stones with the blood of a disarmed man ! You would commit a murder within the gates of the house of peace and charity that is always open to you ! You will never do that, my friends !'

'You are right, Mother, we won't kill him here ; we will take him into the street and shoot him ;' and they pressed closer, laying the muzzles of their guns on the shoulders of the nuns, and pressing the trigger with a click to frighten them into giving way. But not one moved. At last the men grew impatient, and began to swear and threaten. Sœur Rosalie then, with one of those inspirations that sometimes came to her in a great crisis, pushed aside the gun that was brushing her cornette, and, throwing her arms wide open, fell upon her knees.

'For over forty years I have given up my life to

you,' she cried; 'and now in return for my long service, for any good I may have done to yourselves, your wives, or your children, I ask you for the life of this man!'

They were conquered. A loud hurrah rose from the crowd, every musket fell, the courtyard rang with cries of 'Vive Sœur Rosalie!' 'Vive notre Mère!' and the rioters rushed back to the barricades.

Two days later the insurrection was crushed, the fighting was over, and these same men were in prison, or hiding from justice; and their wives and mothers were crowding into the Rue de l'Épée de Bois, imploring Sœur Rosalie to go and intercede for their pardon; and she, crying as heartily as any of them, made reckless promises, assuring them that they had only to trust in God, and all would come right.

One young artisan, whom Sœur Rosalie had long known as a most respectable hard-working fellow, had been carried away by the delirium of the hour, and from his superior intelligence had become one of the leaders in his quarter; he was now in prison waiting trial for his life. His only child, a little girl of five, came every day to the convent, crying for 'papa'—she had done nothing

but cry ever since his arrest. One day General Cavaignac came to see Sœur Rosalie. When his visit was over she took him to see the school. They entered the room together, and, taking the little child by the hand, she led her up to the General. 'My child,' she said, 'this is the gentleman who can pardon your papa and give him back to you.'

The baby knelt down, and joining her small hands, as if General Cavaignac were a saint that she was praying to, 'Ah, good little Monsieur,' she sobbed out, 'give him back to me! he is so good—my papa! Forgive him!'

'No; he has been very wicked, I cannot forgive him,' replied the General; and, turning brusquely, he left the room. But two days afterwards the wicked man came home.

By degrees the prisons were emptied, the debt of justice was paid in the measure which the Government felt it prudent to exact, and there only remained now the work of conciliating the insurgents, of appeasing the angry passions which were only the more fierce from being baulked and crushed down by the strong arm they had attempted to break. Sœur Rosalie resumed her mission of peacemaker and conspirator, as in 1830.

She knew better than most others how many had been compelled against their will to join in the movement, and she looked upon these men now solely as objects of pity, and left nothing undone to rescue them from the pursuit of justice. But, indeed, when they had been voluntarily guilty, she was just as eager to help them to escape. During these fifty years of her service and sovereignty in the faubourg, she had made great friends with the police, and many of the staff were willing enough to connive at her illegal proceedings, and shut their eyes to 'our Mother's' treasonable practices. When the Commissary of the quarter came to the convent to look for arms after the general disarming, he said to Sœur Rosalie that he only presented himself for form's sake, as he knew he was not likely to find arms in her house.

'You are much mistaken,' she replied, 'we have a good collection here;' and she took him to where a large number of guns, sabres, &c., were piled up, having been deposited with her by men who had been forced to take them, but who could not be induced to use them, and fled to her for shelter while the fighting went on.

It required nothing short of heroic love and hope not to lose heart before the task of moral

and social restoration that now awaited Sœur Rosalie amongst her people. The material misery, which followed on the breaking up of the machinery that kept life going in the poorest of the working classes, held smouldering fires of revolution, which it was essential to put out, under pain of seeing the flame leap up more fiercely than ever. Sœur Rosalie maintained that love and gentleness alone could accomplish this work of pacification ; that the time was past for harsh measures ; that society now should make a generous peace with the people, and treat them as convalescent sufferers rather than as conquered enemies. Incorrigible optimist that she was, she persisted in viewing the Revolution as a sort of malady which the people caught like any other epidemic, and she impressed on persons of all classes—politicians and philanthropists—that it was no use attempting to deal with it unless they were prepared to see it in this light. She held that the rioters were, to a great extent, no more responsible for the wild deeds they committed when the fumes of blood and gunpowder had got into their heads, than the patients in the hospital were accountable for their ravings in the delirium of fever. She stood up for her faubourg with a warmth

of partisanship that it was hard to withstand, and which, if it failed to rehabilitate the rioters, had at least the effect of enlisting pity in their behalf. They were now paying dearly for their hour of criminal madness ; and although the administration was dealing out large sums of money for relief in the worst districts of Paris, it was found extremely difficult to cope with the miseries to be relieved, and with the abuses inseparable from indiscriminate official almsgiving ; the most deserving cases sometimes were left unassisted, while others were assisted several times. The Mayor of the 12th Arrondissement went to Sœur Rosalie to see if no remedy could be applied to this confusion. She suggested that a band of gentlemen visitors should be organised to go round and discover the most needy and deserving, and then add to the alms of food or money the sometimes more necessary ones of kind words, sympathy, and good counsel. This proposal was met by a great outcry of opposition. It was alleged that the gentlemen who volunteered as visitors would be insulted, molested ; that their lives, in fact, would be endangered if they ventured into the slums and purlieus where the Revolution was still crouching like a wild beast made more savage by its wounds. Sœur

Rosalie maintained that this was a calumny. The rioters, who had been lately shooting down their fellow-citizens from the barricades, were now, she declared, sitting broken-spirited and penitent amidst their wives and children, no longer tigers, but tame, beaten dogs, ready to lick any hand that was held out to them ; the frenzy of revolt had given way to despair or stolid resignation, and their hearts, that were represented as hardened and inaccessible, were ready to melt at a kind word. These arguments prevailed ; the fraternity of visitors was formed, and the result entirely justified her counsels.

The visitors had many curious and consoling experiences in their *tournée* through the Faubourg St. Marceau. One, too characteristic to be omitted, was related to me by M. de Melun himself, though in his interesting notice of Sœur Rosalie he mentions it as having occurred to 'a disciple of Sœur Rosalie's.'

After a long round through the district, he came to an attic where a young foreman was living, or rather starving, with a wife and several children. He had had a superior education, and was quite an artist in his way, and this had given him a kind of leadership amongst his fellow-artisans of the fau-

bourg. Carried away by the wild visions that had lured so many to join the insurrection, he was elected a sort of leader; he had flung his whole heart into the desperate venture, and was now sunk into a torpor of despair from which nothing could rouse him; his wife and children were dying of hunger before his eyes, but even their cries could not move him to go forth and try to get bread for them. M. de Melun knocked several times without being answered; at last the door was opened by a man wearing that air of sullen desperation which is the forerunner of madness induced by hunger; his eye had a wavering light in it, his beard had been allowed to grow, and his hair was unkempt for days, his whole appearance was defiant and savage. M. de Melun, who was little more than a boy at the time, was for a moment intimidated, but with that grace of inborn courtesy which was all his own, he apologised for the intrusion: 'I heard,' he said, 'that you were in trouble, and I have come to see if I can be of any service to you.'

The artisan was staggered by his visitor's gentleness, and allowed him to come in. M. de Melun directed his attention at once to the sick wife and the children, and without putting a ques-

tion to force confidence, he soon induced the poor fellow to relent, and before long to open his mind freely, which he did by bursting out into a tirade against society, accusing it of all the misery he had brought upon himself, and vowing to be revenged on the classes that had ruined and humiliated him. M. de Melun let him rave on, and then, leading the conversation to the past, he brought him to talk of his childhood, of his mother, of the early innocent days before he knew anything of social theories and reforms, until, softened by these tender innocent memories, he consented to accept, as a loan, a little money to buy bread and to pay for a visit from the doctor.

That evening, when the visitors met to give an account of their day's work, M. de Melun told this incident, which so moved his companions that on the spot they contributed a round sum, and M. de Melun set off with it there and then to the Rue Mouffetard.

'Forgive me,' he said, 'for disturbing you at this late hour; but I have come with a message from some of my friends. I was telling them this evening that one of our brothers had got into temporary difficulties and had need of a little money to begin his work again; they immediately begged me to

take to you this trifling sum, as a loan that you can repay at your convenience.'

The poor man was too overcome to speak ; he grasped M. de Melun's hand in silence.

'You see,' continued his visitor, laughing to hide his own emotion, 'that wicked society that you have vowed vengeance on is not so bad as you make it out, after all !'

'Ah, Monsieur !' exclaimed the artisan, 'I am sure you are not one of the rich ; if you were, you would not have done this !'

To disarm the spirit which found utterance in this cry was Sœur Rosalie's lifelong aim. She held that nothing so tended to conciliate the poor as personal intercourse between them and the rich, and she lost no opportunity in striving to facilitate and promote it. When Frederic Ozanam and his seven enthusiastic comrades founded their brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paule, it was to Sœur Rosalie they went for direction, for poor families to visit, and it was she who supplied them with their first bread and soup and coal tickets. A conference was founded at once in her parish, and she watched its growth and that of the society all over France with a keen and helpful interest, and was often heard to say that no work of our time had produced

such widespread results for good as this brotherhood of her own great patron, St. Vincent de Paule.

The welcome and the success which so soon rewarded the labours of the confraternity are the more remarkable, from the fact that genial intercourse between the rich and poor is greatly hindered in France by that spirit of inexorable logic which expresses itself, from time to time, in those savage revolutions that amaze and horrify the world. These fierce reprisals are simply the practical outcome of that democratic axiom which has taken root in the mind of the poorer classes, 'The superfluity of the rich is the patrimony of the poor.' Those who have experience of the poor in England and in France cannot fail to be struck by the difference which the predominance of this principle creates in the latter country. If you give sixpence to a poor man in England, he takes it thankfully as a gratuitous gift ; but if you offer it to a French beggar, he looks at it, and says to himself, ' This sixpence is over and above that rich man's wants, therefore he owes it to me ; and how do I know but that it ought to be a shilling, and that he is not keeping back another sixpence that belongs to me ?' And the worst of it is, that nine times out of ten

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the poor man is right : we are keeping back the other sixpence, and consequently, instead of being his benefactor, we are his debtor. Assuming that we grant his premises, I don't see how we are to escape the conclusion ; but it is evident that intercourse carried on upon this logical basis is not apt to ripen into that warm sympathy and mutual kindly feeling which so abundantly rewards our service of the poor at home.

The famine, the cholera, and the Revolution which closed the reign of Louis Philippe were the last public events that broke in upon the calm tenor of Sœur Rosalie's life. Henceforth her mission pursued its placid course, free from the exciting solemnities and tragic terrors of pestilence or politics. It was still, in the truest sense of the word, heroic. The battles sustained, the victories won, the unsundering courage evinced during the remaining years of her life displayed an amount of energy and self-sacrifice more rare and admirable than those passing acts of heroism which flashed out with a splendour of dramatic *éclat*, and won the applause of men.

Her apostolate of love embraced every stage of human life, as it did every form of human suffering. If her charity had a special attraction, it was

to the aged and to children ; but this predilection for the two ages most pathetic in their helplessness did not make her less devoted and pitiful to the intervening ones. She took the baby into the *crèche*, and cherished it till it grew to be a toddling child, and then she led it to the asylum, and watched over it till it was of an age to pass on to the school ; here she guarded the child growing into girlhood, taught her her duty to God and to man, gave her the means of gaining an honest livelihood, and, thus armed, sent her forth into the world. It might seem that she had now done all that was possible, and that her work of helpfulness was fully accomplished ; but it soon became apparent to Sœur Rosalie that it was not so, that she was abandoning her children at the very moment when they most needed her support and vigilance. The young girls, whom she had so far guarded from sin and harm, left the protection of the convent, to find the workshop and the *atelier* ready, like an open gulf, to devour them. Corrupt principles and alluring companionship suddenly replaced the salutary influences of the Sisters ; pious canticles were exchanged for ribald songs, and innocent mirth for coarse jokes ; everything that the apprentice had been taught to respect and admire she now heard

ridiculed and attacked ; evil influences and opportunities surrounded her on all sides.

It frequently happened that Sœur Rosalie's children, on leaving the warm pure shelter of her wing, felt such a repugnance to the vicious atmosphere of these centres of work, and to the coarseness and sometimes the impiety of their own homes, that they would fly from both, and hire a garret and take in work to support themselves. But Sœur Rosalie was quick to detect the graver perils which awaited them in this life of isolation, where they were thrown entirely upon their own strength and their own resources without sympathy or companionship, and her maternal solicitude never rested until she found a remedy for this new form of danger. Nowhere did the genius of her charity show itself more remarkably than in the invention of the *Patronage*. This *œuvre*, which put the crown on her careful training of these young lives, was like a chain that she riveted to them when they left school, and by which she continued still to hold them, and maintain the good influence that she had hitherto exercised over them. The scheme was warmly taken up by a number of ladies, who went round to the various *ateliers* where her children were apprenticed, and persuaded the employers to

coöperate in the idea, which was as much in their interest as that of the apprentices. The object of it was to create for the young girls a centre of interest where they could go during their free time for advice, amusement, and sympathy ; where they could spend part of every Sunday and holiday, and be rescued from the danger of bad company. The nuns proposed to let the convent serve as the meeting-place for them ; here they would have confidential talks with their old teachers, an instruction from the chaplain on Sundays, recreation in the garden, books, &c. The ladies of the Patronage were to come and make acquaintance with them, giving them wider opportunities of finding employment and good protection in case of need, and thus adding the chance of material advantages to the spiritual and moral ones already secured. The good effects of the work soon became manifest, and employers, who had at first showed themselves hostile, grew to be its warmest supporters. They found that it acted as a check on the apprentices, that those who belonged to the Patronage and accepted the conditions it imposed—viz. frequentation of the Sacraments, steady conduct, and regular attendance in the workroom—were more satisfactory than those who did not, and the result was that they encour-

aged all their apprentices to join it; it served, moreover, as an advertisement for their own *ateliers*: the ladies of the Patronage came to know them, and employed them in preference to others.

The work had beneficial effects in other ways. It enabled Sœur Rosalie to interest her grown-up children—*mes grands-enfants*—in their younger or more destitute neighbours, and gave them occasions for exercising that blessed spirit of helpfulness that she had the gift of communicating to those who came in contact with her. The young girls would save up their *sous* to buy food or some article of clothing for a little orphan that Sœur Rosalie was interested in, or they would go to teach some poor sick child who could not come to school. Two young washerwomen, who had no *sous* to spare, agreed to go every Sunday to fetch the clothes of a poor old cripple, and wash them during the week and mend them, and bring them back the following Sunday. A little dressmaker devoted her recreation hours to patching and darning for the ragged children of a charwoman. When these traits of kindness came to Sœur Rosalie's knowledge, they would bring tears of thankfulness into her eyes, and her heart would swell with pride and joy, as that of

a real mother at the good and generous deeds of her children. .

But, alas ! it was not always golden deeds that she had to chronicle of these young lives. Many a one made shipwreck at the outset, and drifted out of harbour, far away into stormy and troubled waters. But Sœur Rosalie remained their mother still ; and when they returned, as many of them did—floated home by some strong current of grace—those motherful arms and that great motherful heart were open to them with a welcome made more tender by the extremity of their need.

Sœur Rosalie, who was the veriest woman that ever lived, was naturally fond of making a match. Many a droll page might be filled with her achievements in this line, the trouble she gave herself to find a ‘ brave garçon ’ for one of her children whom she thought called to the marriage state, and the clever devices she employed to test his qualifications for making a good husband ; and when these preliminaries were settled, the interest she would take in the *ménage* and the trousseau, the way she would condescend to the feminine weakness of the bride in her anxiety to make a pretty appearance and sport a smart gown on the wedding-day ! All this was eminently characteristic, and presents to

us another aspect of Sœur Rosalie's lovable and many-sided nature.

Nor did her solicitude end here. She followed her children to their new home, kept herself *au courant* of their troubles and their interests, watched to see that the husband kept clear of the wine-shop, and the wife of ribbons and frippery and idle gossip and woe to them both if 'our Mother' found them tripping!

She lived to see a generation of grandchildren grown up around her; and in her later years, when making the round of the schools, she was apt to hold up the example of the mothers to the emulation of the daughters: 'Fie, for shame! Your mamma would never have put her copy-book in such a mess!' or 'Your mamma was a great comfort to me, child; she was obedient and fond of her work.' These compliments were carried home, and took the sting out of many a sharp rebuke that followed them.

When the men and women, whom she had known young, and seen toiling painfully through life, came to be old, they still found Sœur Rosalie waiting for them with her tender kindness and practical help. Nothing seemed to her to claim so imperiously the compassion of us all, as the lot of the poor when

they have grown past their work, and are thrown destitute on the charity of the world. Old age, with its infirmities, its disenchantments, its pains and aches, is a season of trial for the rich ; but for the poor it is a stage of unmitigated suffering, without hope and without even that consideration that it has many rights to claim. The great trouble of the aged poor is to find a lodging, any corner where they may wait for their release in security, free from the dread of being turned out by the landlord ; but even a bed in the *chambrée* is a refuge they cannot count on being able to pay for out of the uncertain alms that drop to them from one day to another. Sœur Rosalie determined to secure a roof for at least a few of the most deserving aged poor of her quarter. With the help of her friends she got a house, which she divided into as many rooms as possible ; she furnished these with the strict necessities, and there installed a number of old men and women. Here they might sleep in peace, with no fear of being molested by landlord or police ; here they might wait, doing what little work they were still equal to, until the summons came for them to die and go to rest.

During the latter years of Sœur Rosalie's life, her most frequent visits were to this asylum for the

aged and to the babies at the *crèche*, the two extremities of life to which her heart turned with deepest compassion. Yet this mother of the poor, who lived with them, and found her delight in serving them, was a woman whom distinguished men admired for the charm of her conversation and the grace and intellectual qualities of her mind. It captivated M. de Lamennais, whose genius Sœur Rosalie was capable of appreciating, while she loved him for his love of the poor. He drew some of the most elevated of his commentaries on the *Imitation of Christ* from his conversations with her. After his fall, their intercourse ceased. She went to see him once, when he was in great trouble ; he seemed moved by her kindness, but when she attempted to approach the subject that was uppermost in both their minds, he turned the conversation with a stern coldness that made it impossible to go further. When M. de Lamennais was dying, Sœur Rosalie tried to gain access to him, but the same inexorable hand which shut the door upon the priest kept it closed against the Sister of Charity. She never saw him again.

Amongst other remarkable men who sought her friendship was Donoso Cortez, Marquis de Valdegama, for many years ambassador from the Court

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of Spain to the Tuileries. He was meditating, one day, on the account he would have to render of his life, and it occurred to him that it was not enough to fulfil perfectly the functions of an ambassador and a man of the world, that something more was demanded of him. He knew Sœur Rosalie by report, as all Paris did, and it struck him that he would go and take counsel with her.

‘Ma Sœur,’ he said, ‘I have been thinking that my life is not what it ought to be ; I spend all my time paying visits ; now, I don’t want to have to answer, when I come before the Judgment-seat and am asked what I have done, “Lord, I paid visits.” Can you help me to turn my life to better account ?’

Sœur Rosalie reflected a moment, and then replied : ‘I think you cannot do better, since you have the time, than go on paying visits ; only instead of paying them always to fine ladies and gentlemen, you should pay them sometimes to the poor.’ She gave him a scheme of work, and a list of poor families, and it was agreed that he should come once a week and report what he had done, and receive fresh instructions. For the too short remainder of his life, M. de Valdegama was punctual in paying this visit to the Rue de l’Epée de Bois, and to the garrets and cellars to which Sœur Rosalie

directed him. He called himself her disciple, and she numbered him amongst her dearest friends and most munificent benefactors ; when he came to die, she nursed him through his last illness, and mourned him sincerely.

But it was not alone the envoys of royalty, but sovereigns themselves, who found out this large-hearted Mother of the poor, and came to do homage to her virtues. The fame of her charity and the wonders it worked reached the Tuileries, and alms came flowing from the palace-gates to the far-away faubourg. The Emperor and Empress went to see the Daughter of St. Vincent, who, like a rival queen, reigned by serving in the dark places of their bright city. Sœur Rosalie was neither flattered nor abashed by the honour, but received the august visitors with her natural grace of manner and that full measure of courtesy which their rank commanded. She won the heart of the Empress, who ever after remained her friend and a noble benefactress to her poor. The Emperor questioned her about the condition of the faubourg, and she answered him freely, entering into the needs, the perils, and the capabilities of the population with the knowledge of close experience and with a wisdom that surprised him. He was

charmed with her, and at parting invited her to come and see him at the Tuileries, where he said she should always have free and direct access to him.

Sœur Rosalie accepted the invitation ; but she used it sparingly. On the rare occasions when her white *cornette* was seen in the Imperial ante-room, the Emperor would come himself to greet her, and would draw her into animated conversation on those arduous social problems that she spent her life in trying to solve, and understood, he used to declare, better than any of his ministers. She was, in truth, the most practical of political economists, for her science did not stop short at pointing out the evil, it discovered and applied the remedy. People are much given to speaking of the present time as bad, and of past ages as much better than the present. It is idle work comparing one age with another ; we have not materials for a real comparison ; but by dint of hearing it said that egotism is the predominant malady of the present age, we have come to believe it. In France, certainly, this disease is so distinctly prominent as to mar, in a measure, the charm of a sympathetic and brilliant society ; but when we include our age in general, and our English selves in particular, in

this sweeping accusation of egotism, we are, perhaps, only saying, in other words, that we are trying to do better, and accusing ourselves with a generous and contrite exaggeration of not having begun sooner. We have let in the light that was kept out, partly by selfish inertia, partly by ignorance; it has now penetrated into the dark places, and is revealing the rank, foul things that generated there and throve under cover of the darkness.

Thank God, we have made a broad rent in that old black cloak of ignorance that so long wrapped up the masses in safe impotence, staving off from them and from us that day of reckoning which, sooner or later, overtakes every reign of injustice, even in this world. The tongue of the dumb beast has been loosened, and he has turned upon us, and is asking, 'Why should there be suffering classes? If God's justice is on earth anywhere, it ought to be everywhere: in our squalid slums and echoing tenements and workshops, as well as in the Senate and the courts and the well-ordered respectabilities of your lives. If there be any sincerity in this doctrine of solidarity that your humanitarians are preaching, if it be true that all humanity is so closely knit together in the bond of

an indissoluble kindred that no single member can sin or suffer without all the others, in some degree, participating in the suffering or the sin, then why are the vast majority of the members so weighed down with misery and beset with temptation as to be doomed to wretchedness in this world, with overwhelming probabilities of damnation in the next ?

The suffering classes of every nation are asking in chorus this tremendous 'why?' From the poor, the condemned, the disinherited it is clamouring up to heaven, like a challenge and a portent: 'Why should we suffer while the minority enjoy? Make room for us at the well-spread board! It is our turn to eat and drink and be merry. Make room for us!'

All over the world it is sounding like a war-cry, and everywhere the people are answering it with a frenzy of passion that hurries them on to crime. In Russia it has let loose a long-suffering and exasperated peasantry on the Jews, not as the Semitic race, but as the race of money-makers and money-holders, who have tortured them; it has raised Nihilists from the Kremlin to Siberia; it has created anarchists in the bright rich cities of France, and land-leaguers in the bogs and mud-

huts of Ireland. Everywhere it is the same voice uttering the same complaint: 'Why should we be suffering and toiling while you, the minority, are enjoying?'

And we, who are thus fiercely challenged, instinctively hug tighter our threatened inheritance, our immunities, and our treasures—all those pleasant things which, to those who are suffering for the want of them, constitute the supreme good of life. But the tide is rolling in, and our alarmed, resentful protest will not stay its coming. The prophets, from their watch-towers, saw the danger and sounded a warning fifty years ago. 'Let us fill the empty stomachs and light fires on the perishing hearths, and there will be an end of rebels and revolutions,' said Sœur Rosalie.

'The avenger is bearing down upon us! Let us come to terms with the people or we are lost!' cried Frederic Ozanam; and he rallied the forces of charity under the flag of St. Vincent de Paul to meet and stem the advancing wave.

In 1854 a great misfortune befell Sœur Rosalie. The Emperor sent her the Cross of the Legion of Honour. The shock of this 'bitter humiliation,' as she called it, was so severe that she fell ill. Her Sisters for once did not sympathise with her in her

trouble, and as to the faubourg, it rose in open opposition to her. As soon as the event became known, the population went wild with joy. Every beggar, every rough in the *arrondissement*, felt that he had been personally honoured, and there came a concert of loyalty to the Emperor, and expressions of congratulation from every dingy court and den of revolution, that contrasted strangely with Sœur Rosalie's woe-begone countenance. She remained inconsolable in spite of the general rejoicing, and never could be persuaded to appear even once amidst her people with the badge of honour on her breast. The Emperor and Empress came to see her soon after, and the Emperor, in his gracious way, reproached her for not wearing the cross.

'Sire,' she said, 'St. Vincent de Paule would not like it. I should, in fact, be ashamed to let him see such a grand affair on the breast of one of his daughters. I don't think he would know her.'

'In that case, ma Sœur,' said the Empress, 'I will give you another cross that you will not be obliged to hide from St. Vincent.'

That summer, on her way to Biarritz, the Empress made a pilgrimage to the old oak-tree in the Landes, called St. Vincent's Oak, because

he used to sit under its shade, and discourse on holy things and teach the children their catechism. She carried away a branch of the tree, and had it made into a cross, with a silver Christ attached, and presented it to Sœur Rosalie on her return, saying, 'You need not hide this from St. Vincent.'

Sœur Rosalie valued this relic of her holy founder doubly for the sake of the august lady who loved the poor like a true Catholic queen, and once earned the title of *Sœur de Charité* for her heroic courage in going to assist them in the cholera. Sœur Rosalie kept this cross on her writing-table in the parlour, and had a habit of looking to it as if asking an inspiration while she listened, or gave advice to anxious petitioners. It is now in the possession of her relative, M. Eugène Rendu.

More than half a century had now elapsed since Madame Rendu had made the sacrifice of her child to God, and during that long interval they had only met once. Year after year Sœur Rosalie had held out the hope of paying a visit to her old home ; but when the time came, the claims that detained her were so urgent and manifold that there was no breaking loose from them. At last the community made a plot to get her

portrait painted, and send it to Madame Rendu as a tribute of their grateful love to her, the mother of their mother. It required a great deal of pleading and persuading to win Sœur Rosalie's consent, but finally she yielded, and the result was an admirable likeness, which is now to be seen in that little parlour where the original passed so many hours of her life. It is a noble face; the features are finely proportioned, the expression of the countenance calm, ardent, delicate, and energetic; the hands, modestly folded, have a character of their own, the lines indicating at once refinement and strength. This portrait of her child gave unfeigned delight to Madame Rendu. She used to sit for hours gazing up at it in a kind of tender ecstasy, talking to it, consulting it.

It was a great and constant sacrifice that Sœur Rosalie made in denying her mother the consolation of a visit; but the very strength of her natural affection made her shrink from listening to the promptings of her heart, and snatching at a consolation that was not a duty. Love of the poor had not weakened these sweet and holy ties of nature in that capacious heart: she remained to the last warmly attached to her early friends, and in her community she was the most

affectionate Sister. Any one she loved took root in her heart, once and for ever. She was absolutely broken-hearted, when a young novice, at being separated from Sœur Tardy, her first mistress, and who had formed her to the religious life. For years Sœur Rosalie cherished tenderly an old shoe of hers as a precious relic, and only parted with it finally during a retreat, in a moment of heroic detachment, when she made the sacrifice of a book and some little pictures that had belonged to Sœur Tardy.

Later she grew so warmly attached to all her Sisters, and wept such bitter tears over them when they died, that she made a scruple of conscience of this too great natural feeling; but a venerable ecclesiastic, whose pardon she asked for having one day given way before him to uncontrollable grief at the loss of one of her Sisters, replied comfortingly, 'Don't be too unhappy about your want of detachment, ma Sœur; if you did not cry over your Sisters, you would not be so tender-hearted to the poor.'

This tender-heartedness made Sœur Rosalie's rule as a superior as gentle and generous as it was stimulating. She would have carried the young postulants in her arms like babies, had it

been physically possible ; but when the first efforts were made, and she became convinced that their vocation was solid and their health equal to the strain of the rule, she pushed them onwards and upwards with a very fire of zeal, and spared them nothing ; whatever was loathsome to nature, repugnant to its fastidiousness, or painful to its self-love was freely laid upon the soul that aspired to be the servant of Jesus in the person of His poor. The religious that she formed came out of her school bearing the stamp of her own character : they had learned her ways with the poor, her gentle compassion, her indomitable courage, her sunny cheerful spirit. But love of the perfection of her Sisters never led her to relax her watchful care of their health. At the least sign of illness she, who was so exacting and pitiless to herself, took fright like a veritable mother, and would have them rest, and take better food and many little indulgences that she never, under any circumstance, dreamed of granting to herself. She seemed to grow in tenderness for others as the years went on. Although she had overcome that shrinking from the sight of wounds and sufferings which as a novice had made her vocation so painful, Sœur Rosalie remained as sensitive as

ever to the spectacle of the sufferings of the poor, so much so that she actually found matter for confession in this too great softness of heart towards them. How the accusation would have delighted St. Vincent de Paule, who nearly laughed out loud for joy in the confessional when a young novice accused herself of too great love of the poor !

It would, perhaps, seem to many that in a life so entirely absorbed by active work, so filled with external cares and business as was Sœur Rosalie's, there can hardly have been leisure for the cultivation of those interior virtues on which the sanctity of a true religious should be built. In so short and imperfect a sketch as the present one, it has been only possible to dwell on that side of her life which shone visibly to the world outside her convent ; but we must cast one rapid reverent glance within the veil, so as to catch a glimpse, however faint, of those hidden virtues that flourished so beautifully under the shadow of that charity which is the greatest of all.

Her humility was so deep and sincere that those who knew her best were wont to say it was her predominant virtue. It was a wonderful triumph of grace over nature and the evidence of the senses

that it should be so, for seldom have the doings of the right hand been more obviously forced upon the knowledge of the left than in Sœur Rosalie's case. Facts are stubborn things, and a well-won victory is amongst the keenest delights that the heart of man can taste ; this delight was served to her with a fulness of manifestation and development rarely granted to a conqueror in this world. She lived to see her hard-fought battle crowned with magnificent and lasting triumphs ; to see herself victorious over obstacles that had baffled all previous attempts to cope with them ; to see enemies conquered who had refused to surrender to all other forces. She had, by sheer strength of personal influence and self-devotion, overcome in a great measure the antagonism of classes, the indifference of the rich and the hostile mistrust of the poor ; she had lived to see God worshipped by a population who hardly knew Him by name when she came amongst them ; to see a generation growing up under the blessed influences of religion, men and women obeying its laws, living and dying with the Sacraments of the Church—the mission that she had begun solidly established and bearing abundant fruit. She saw all this, and she knew that her name was in benediction far and wide ; yet

Sœur Rosalie honestly believed that she was an unprofitable servant, that she had been a hindrance to the graces that would have been poured out upon her people had not her sinfulness impeded the flow ; she was convinced that all the good that had been accomplished was done, not by her, but in spite of her, and that infinitely more would have been done had some one less unworthy been in her place.

It was a constant wonder to her, and the subject of her deepest thanksgiving to the end of her life, that God should have called her to His service and tolerated her amongst His favoured spouses. When people came flocking from far and near to seek her counsel and ask her prayers, she would say to her Sisters, but rather as if speaking to herself, 'What can they be thinking of? It passes all understanding!'

It frequently happened that people came to thank her for the success that had followed her suggestions, or the answers that had come, as they believed, to her prayers ; but she would stop them at once with, 'Ah, yes, I remember I set a very holy soul to pray for your intention, an old paralytic who helps me wonderfully.' And from this she would go on to speak of the efficacy of the

prayers of the suffering poor, and the wonderful favours they obtain from God.

It was the same in the community. If any good came, she was lost in wonder at God's mercy in sending it in spite of her unworthiness; if any trouble came, it was all her fault: her sins were visited on her Sisters. 'Ah, this poor faubourg!' she would sometimes say, with a sigh; 'when will God have pity on it and send some one who may draw down a blessing on these sorely-tried people?'

Yet this profound sense of her own unworthiness never engendered discouragement, that cowardly foe which St. Francis of Sales somewhere says has damned more souls than all the passions put together. Sœur Rosalie was preserved from it by her childlike trust in the Divine Love. 'The surest way not to fall,' she used to say, 'is to walk with two crutches: confidence in God and mistrust of ourselves.'

She was fond of telling a dream that she had one night some years before her death. She was dead, and standing before the Judgment-seat, covered with confusion at the sight of her sins, and awaiting in terror the sentence of eternal condemnation that was going to be pronounced upon her. Suddenly she was surrounded by a crowd of miserable-look-

ing people carrying old hats and boots and tattered clothes of every description ; they all began to cry out interceding for her, and saying that it was she who had given them these things, until our Lord, turning to her with a softened countenance, said, 'In consideration of all these rags given in My name, I open to you the kingdom of heaven for all eternity!' This dream, which Sœur Rosalie used to tell with great glee, and a sort of lurking belief in it as a prophecy, was in truth the outcome of her humility, and expressed very faithfully her estimate of her own worth and work.

It gave her positive pain to hear herself praised, and none whatever to hear herself blamed, or even calumniated. On receiving a letter of gross abuse from a wretched man whose conduct had worn out the patience and resources of an honourable family, and whom she had succoured while it was possible, she exclaimed, in a tone of musing satisfaction, 'That man knows me well ; I am just what he describes ; he has taken my true portrait.'

She was humble for her community, and dreaded the world's applause for it far more than its blame. It sometimes happened that the work of the Sisters, some heroic act of charity, or some startling result of their efforts, got spoken of in the newspapers ;

this was a great trial to Sœur Rosalie. 'We shall have Sisters of Charity sticking feathers on their *cornettes* by and by !' she exclaimed angrily one day, on reading a laudatory article in a journal ; 'a poor Carmelite, hidden away in her cell, is often much more useful to the Church than people whose works appear before men and get lauded to the skies !'

The lot of the Carmelite always seemed an enviable one to the busy daughter of St. Vincent. She had little time for that silent prayer at the feet of her Lord which consoles the daughter of St. Teresa for the trials of her crucified life ; but her heart turned to the Tabernacle as the flower opens its chalice to the sun, and in the midst of her countless and distracting occupations she was able to commune with God in prayer. She confessed to one of her Sisters that she never made a more recollected meditation than when hurrying through the streets on her errands of charity. 'The passers-by,' she used to say, 'don't distract me any more than if they were trees in the forest ; I feel like that Saint who compared the world to a great wood where the soul should never let itself be distracted by the briars and brambles.' It was the same everywhere and at all times : in the hospital dressing a wound, in the parlour receiving visitors, in the school,

in the kitchen, no matter what she was doing, her heart kept watch, and the eye of her soul remained fixed on God. One day, some of the Sisters had been detained so long with the poor outside, that they had to spend over the wash-tub the hour of meditation.

‘What is to prevent your making your meditation here, while doing your washing?’ Sœur Rosalie said; ‘you have only to consider how your souls ought to be white as these soap-suds, buoyant like them, so as to rise easily to God, and that in order to make your consciences pure and snowy as this linen, you must wash them in the waters of penance.’

This practice of the presence of God became so habitual to her that it pervaded her countenance, her manner, and lent an air of extraordinary dignity to her simplest actions. Her Sisters would watch her sweeping out a room, or performing some other humble duty, and used to draw edification from the modesty and devout recollection of her demeanour. They said it reminded them of what our Blessed Lady must have been in the house of St. John. But to see her at prayer was like seeing a Saint in an ecstasy: her whole being prayed; her senses were closed to external things; people might

come and go, and watch her, without fear of disturbing her. Sometimes, when she fancied herself unseen, she would stop in the midst of her sweeping, or sewing, or writing, and fall upon her knees, and begin to pray with intense fervour, as if stealing a moment with a beloved friend ; on hearing footsteps she would rise quickly and go on with her work.

The Eucharist was the home of her heart, the centre that drew her as the magnet draws the iron. It was said by one who knew her interior life that Sœur Rosalie lived for her Communions and her poor. The special characteristic of her piety was its childlike simplicity. Her favourite devotions were what she called 'the old-fashioned ones,' and foremost amongst them the Rosary. She very seldom spoke of spiritual things to outsiders ; but when invited to do so, her words were full of the deepest spiritual wisdom, and an emotion that penetrated souls, sometimes changing the current of a life. She never preached to worldlings, and she made large allowance for that elastic code which they call their 'duties to society' ; but she denounced with unqualified severity the modern system of compromise that began to be the fashion in her day : the mixing up of piety and dissipation, spiritual

reading in the morning, with scandal-mongering in the afternoon, and dancing in semi-pagan attire in the evening—good works taken up between times, as a tonic to stimulate an appetite satiated with pleasure—this sort of thing found no quarter with Sœur Rosalie. She had infinite indulgence for out-and-out sinners, but none for these half-and-half Christians. ‘They make me shudder,’ was her expression in speaking of them.

During the fifty years that Sœur Rosalie had served the poor with untiring devotion, the days that she had been free from physical suffering were few and far between. She had been all her life subject to palpitations of the heart, which increased with age, and rendered walking extremely painful, and she suffered from intermittent fever, which confined her to her cell for months at a time, causing serious alarm to her medical attendants. During these long illnesses, when worn with pain and fever, she would gather up her strength to rise and go to receive Holy Communion, and then drag herself back to bed, where the rest of the day passed in an unbroken act of thanksgiving. Her greatest trial in these illnesses was being cut off from her regular Communions and the service of the poor, and more

than once her recovery was compromised by her impatience to resume both. On one occasion, just as the worst was over and she was beginning to sit up a little in the afternoon, a man came to the convent and asked to see *notre Mère*; he was told she was too ill to see anybody, but he insisted that he must be let up, that there was something he wanted done which no one else could do. The Sister infirmarian protested that she had strict orders from the doctor, and dared not disobey them. The man grew violent, and abused her in coarse language. Sœur Rosalie, attracted by the noise, opened the door, and hearing what it was, staggered down the stairs, heard his story, and soothed him in the gentlest way, begging his pardon for having kept him waiting.

When he was gone, the Sister infirmarian, terrified at the probable consequences of this imprudence, began to remonstrate :

‘Mother, you know what the doctor said!’

‘Yes, child. Let the doctors do their duty, and let us do ours,’ was the mild but authoritative reply; ‘and remember, when that man comes again *always* let me know.’

‘But, Mother, he was so violent and unreasonable!’

‘My child, do you expect the poor fellow, when he is distraught with worry, to stop to put on his company manners? You must not take fright at a hasty word and a rough outside. The poor are always better than they seem.’

It was very touching to witness the meeting between Sœur Rosalie and her beloved poor after one of these enforced separations. Her tenderness for them always seemed to have increased in the interval. She would gaze on them, her eyes alight with joy, her whole face beaming with fondest complacency, while they crowded about her, plying her with questions, always sure that what they had to say was of interest to her. Before she was well enough to come down-stairs, she would sit at the window and watch them coming in and out of the convent yard, and hold communication with them by nods and smiles. She called this her recreation.

The sight of these sad faces, made glad by her presence, was one of the keenest enjoyments of Sœur Rosalie's life; so much so that not long before her death she came to reproach herself for having indulged in it too greedily.

When, on emerging from these severe illnesses, she gathered up her strength for making the round of her diocese, as her Sisters playfully called these

visitations of the Faubourg, she suffered such agonising pain that she confessed to the doctor every step was like a thorn driven up into her foot. The community, at the suggestion of some of her friends, entreated her to take a cab for these long *tournées*; but she could never be persuaded to do so; it was too gross an infraction of the rule of poverty to be tolerated—for her. She would remind them how, when St. Vincent in his old age was compelled to drive, instead of walking, he used to speak of his ‘shame at this humiliation.’

For many years before her death Sœur Rosalie was threatened with cataract; when it reached a certain point, her sight failed rapidly; she could no longer see to read, then she ceased to be able to guide herself, and at last she became blind—stone blind. She continued to receive visits as usual in her little parlour; but for a long time the sight of their Mother, led like a little child, feeling her steps with a stick, and groping for the chair before she sat down, was one that few of her children could witness with dry eyes. They suffered for themselves as well as for her; they missed that glance of recognition that had been so comforting, that bright direct glance that was so full of sincerity and sympathy. Instead of coming to the

door, and beckoning to each as their turn came, or going round from one to another, she remained seated, and each person came up, and told her who he was. This inability to recognise people was a bitter trial to her, and, though no word of repining ever escaped her lips, she could not hide the fact that she suffered intensely from it. She acknowledged to one who had her confidence that, had God given her the choice, she would rather He had sent her the most excruciatingly painful disease than this infirmity of blindness. Yet her cheerfulness never flagged. When her Sisters lovingly complained for her, she would rebuke them in her gentle way, and answer penitently, 'I have deserved it; God knows best where to punish us. I took too much pleasure in looking at the poor. He has punished me just in the right place.'

For a long time before the cataract was in a condition to be operated, Sœur Rosalie had to undergo a treatment that caused her intense suffering. A cold lotion was injected into her eyes every five minutes, and other remedies were applied that were a veritable torture. The Sisters who attended her, knowing what pain she was enduring, expressed surprise that she bore it without even a sign of impatience.

‘How could I be impatient,’ she would reply, ‘whilst you are giving me such an example of patience?’

In the month of October 1855 it was decided that the cataract was in a state to be operated on. Sœur Rosalie received the announcement with smiling cheerfulness, and went to the operation with the docility of a child. When the oculist asked if he had hurt her very much, ‘No,’ she replied; ‘you did not hurt me at all; I was thinking, while your hand was doing its kind office, of the contrast there is between my position and that of the poor when they have to undergo an operation: they are obliged to leave their family and go away to the hospital, whilst I am here in my convent and surrounded by the loving care of my Sisters and friends.’

She was obliged for a certain time to remain seated in an upright position and immovable, which was very fatiguing; but when they wanted to make her more comfortable by propping her up with pillows, she would not allow it.

‘I will try and keep myself in the presence of God and my guardian angel, and that will prevent my feeling tired,’ she said; and they ceased to urge her.

Even in this extremity of helplessness, she continued to govern the community, to direct its affairs with her wonted wisdom and sense, and to receive all who cared to come to her. These were many. People came as in the old days, with their sorrows and troubles, and Sœur Rosalie listened to them, and counselled and cheered them with the same compassion, the same clear-sighted wisdom as of old.

The operation was not successful. At first a few rays of light stole in upon the darkness, she was able to distinguish forms, and even occasionally colours ; but it was only a passing glimmer ; the darkness gathered again, and night closed round her.

Early in the following year, the oculist proposed a second operation, and although Sœur Rosalie shrank from it with indescribable repugnance, she consented at once on seeing that her Sisters had their hearts set upon it and were full of hope. Moreover, her health, severely tried by what she had suffered from the previous ordeal, had rallied surprisingly, and seemed quite equal to the fresh strain upon it. Before the day for the operation was fixed, the community and many friends proposed that a novena should be made to obtain her cure without

further recourse to science, but Sœur Rosalie besought them not to attempt it. 'I should be frightened at being the subject of a miracle,' she said ; 'I should feel that God expected something extraordinary from me in return, and my peace of mind would be disquieted. Besides, people who don't know me might think that it was granted because of my virtues.'

These arguments did not convince her friends ; they persisted in making the novena, so Sœur Rosalie yielded ; but she refused to join with them in it. 'I like best to leave myself entirely in the hands of God,' she said ; 'and, besides, I should only spoil everything if I mixed up my prayers with yours.' The answer to the prayers came in a redoubling of the courage and serenity of the sufferer ; but it was still evident that she must seek the aid of science, if indeed a cure was possible, so a day was fixed for the second operation.

On the evening of the 4th of February one of the Sisters happened to mention, at recreation, that that morning, while she was giving out the soup, &c., she had noticed a nice-looking old man, who, after eating his portion, got close to the stove, and stayed there while the distributions lasted ; she asked if he were ill ; he said not, but that he stayed

in the warm room because he had no wood or stove to make a fire at home. She told him to come every morning and that she would give him a good portion of food. Sœur Rosalie was greatly affected by this incident, and rebuked the Sister for letting the man go away without obtaining his name and address, and at once sent out to buy a little stove and a small quantity of wood to be taken to him next morning. This was her last act of charity on earth.

That night she was seized with a cold shivering and great pains. She would not wake up the Sister who slept in the room with her, but waited until the appointed hour for rising, and then called to her. The doctor was sent for in haste, and found that inflammation of the lungs had set in. He saw at once that there was danger, but he did not alarm the community by telling them so. For two days the remedies seemed to be acting successfully. Sœur Rosalie herself was free from apprehensions ; she was chiefly preoccupied about the trouble and fatigue she was causing the Sisters, and spoke of the long convalescence that was before her and the loss of time it was going to cause them all. Her sweetness and patience were more remarkable than ever, and her love for God and the poor seemed

to glow with a more intense fervour. But this did not strike any one as a warning ; every illness, by exercising her virtues, had made the likeness to her Divine model more vivid ; her Sisters used to say that her soul expanded in suffering like a flower in the sunshine.

From continued pain and consequent weakness, her sensitiveness had become extreme, and remedies which she had once found it easy to bear now caused her positive agony ; but she never asked to be spared anything ; she accepted the most painful applications, and took the most nauseous drugs without a word of expostulation.

One morning the Sister infirmarian found that a large blister, which had been badly dressed, had become a wound. The thought of the tortures that her Mother must have endured through the night quite overcame her as she removed the cloth that was saturated with blood, an operation which must, she knew, cause excruciating pain to Sœur Rosalie ; looking at her face to see how she bore it, she saw the sightless eyes uplifted and a sweet smile playing on her countenance. The infirmarian's first thought was that paralysis had set in, and that the dead flesh felt nothing. 'Mother,' she cried, 'am I not hurting you ?' No answer came ; the agony was

so acute that Sœur Rosalie could not speak ; ' Mother, say, do you feel nothing ? ' repeated the Sister.

' Yes, my child,' she said, ' I feel a nail from the Cross of my Saviour, and I wanted to keep it a little longer. How much better off I am than our blessed poor ! '

In speaking of her death, as she was fond of doing, and saying what she would like our Lord to do for her in the great crisis, Sœur Rosalie was wont to add, ' And I will want a good three months to prepare quietly before the end comes. '

This longing for quiet sprang chiefly from the idea that the constant activity of her life had a dissipating effect on her soul, and that she would need more than others a spell of quiet to recollect herself before the act of dying. Humility did not let her see that she had been beautifully performing that ' act of dying ' all her life by this very service of self-surrender and immolation.

A friend of hers, the Superior of a cloistered Order, who had recently died, after having sent for Sœur Rosalie in her last illness, in order that ' the presence of an angel might give her courage to die,' had, shortly before expiring, said to her, ' Courage, Sister ! you will soon follow me. ' Sœur

Rosalie had been greatly impressed by these words of her dying friend ; but though she repeated them during this short illness, it was evident that she had no idea their fulfilment was so near at hand. 'I don't know why my dear and holy friend said that to me,' she remarked ; 'if God sees good to leave me some years longer on earth, I am in no hurry to go.' This was on the 5th of February—her last day before eternity.

Madame Rendu had of late been failing rapidly, and had grown very feeble, without any actual illness just at this time ; so it was thought advisable not to send her news of the coming operation ; nor had Sœur Rosalie been told that her mother was in any danger. A beautiful surprise was, meanwhile, being prepared for them by that God whom both had so faithfully served.

On the morning of the 6th, Sœur Rosalie was much better ; all cause for anxiety seemed gone. Shortly after midday, however, a change took place ; she was seized with violent pain in the side, and her pulse went up rapidly. This did not prevent her continuing a familiar discourse that she was making to her religious on the needs of the poor, and the best means just then of meeting them. Her breathing was affected by the pain, and made

speaking difficult ; still, although her Sisters entreated her to rest awhile, she laboured on, as if conscious that the time was short, and that what she had to say must be said quickly. At last speech failed her ; that tongue, which had been as a tuneful instrument from which the Spirit of God had drawn sounds of heavenly sweetness and wisdom, became embarrassed ; her mind began to wander ; her head dropped suddenly on her breast, and she breathed heavily like one asleep.

Her Sisters, in great alarm, sent with haste for her confessor. He came quickly, and proceeded, without delay, to administer the last rites, for he saw that Sœur Rosalie was dying. She still remained like one asleep, apparently unconscious ; but the moment they knelt down, and the magnificent sacramental rite began, she lifted her head, made the sign of the Cross, and rallied to receive its graces into her awakening soul. She joined in the prayers, murmuring inarticulate words ; then her head dropped again, and there was no more awakening until she breathed forth her spirit, and the light of the vision of God broke upon her darkened eyes.*

A great silence followed. The loss was so sudden, and found the Sisterhood so unprepared,

* Feb. 6, 1856.

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that at first they could not believe in it ; but quickly the truth was realised, and the news flew from the death-chamber through the convent and the schools, and thence out into the streets, and the cry, ' Our Mother is dead ! ' rang through the faubourg, and was caught up by the great city beyond, passing the palace-gates, and entering the dwellings of the rich, and the desolate places, and waking everywhere an echo of sorrow and dismay.

Friends who had heard that Sœur Rosalie was ill came to inquire, and learned that she was dead ; but the greater number heard of their bereavement without that slight preparatory warning. The news spread with the electric rapidity that attends a national calamity. The virginal tabernacle was still warm when a crowd had already invaded the room where it lay, while down below a larger crowd filled the courtyard, pressing up eagerly for a last look on the beloved face.

A *chapelle ardente* was quickly prepared, and there, with lights burning round her, Sœur Rosalie was placed, clothed in her habit, crowned with her white cornette, her crucifix clasped to her breast, her rosary on her arm. She was very beautiful to look at, every wrinkle smoothed away by the perfecting touch of death, the beam of immortality on

her brow, and a smile of heavenly sweetness on her lips. One of the beholders involuntarily exclaimed, ' See, she is smiling at God !'

Long processions from various points of the Faubourg St. Marceau came steadily on to the Rue de l'Épée de Bois—a coming and a going stream, patient, orderly, silent, only breaking the silence to pray, or to speak the praises of her who was gone. They called her a saint. They told wonderful things about her, they confessed secrets that had never found utterance before ; for death, even on this side of the grave, is a revealer as well as a concealer : it brings to light secrets that pride or humility, or reverence for the humility of others, keeps closely guarded till the object of them is taken away, and then the impulse to bear witness, to glorify God in His servant, becomes irresistible, and tongues are loosened.

All that day, and all the next, until night closed in and the gates were shut, the stream came flowing from every part of Paris ; but the vast influx, far from disturbing the neighbourhood, seemed to breathe a deathlike stillness over it. Every shop was closed, every window that had a shutter put it up ; the people spoke in low tones as if the whole district were a house of mourning. Artisans left

their work, the *ateliers* were emptied, the busy bread-winners forgot their need, and came to do homage to the memory of Sœur Rosalie. Old men and women, who were too infirm to walk, had themselves carried to the convent, and there, in the presence of her whose humility could no longer be wounded, and of a multitude of strangers of all ranks, they lifted up their voices and proclaimed what she had been to them and done for them. It was a wonderful scene. It recalled those grand, simple ages of faith, when the death of a great servant of God was a family festival in which all the faithful shared, coming from long distances to give glory to God in the triumph of the just soul that had fought the good fight and won the reward.

The people pressed round the coffin, kissing the virginal hands, the tender, firm, helpful hands that for these sixty years had been labouring for others, always outstretched to help or uplifted to bless. Venerable prelates, priests, religious of all orders were there, asking as a favour to say Mass in the presence of the dead Mother, and touching her brow with their rosaries and crucifixes.

On the morning of the funeral that beautiful surprise we have alluded to was announced. Just as the coffin was being closed, a message came for

Sœur Rosalie. It was a letter bearing the post-mark of her old home. It was the announcement of her mother's death : Madame Rendu had died the day before, at the age of eighty-eight. There had been no illness, no agony ; she had fallen softly asleep, like one tired after a long day's work. The news of Sœur Rosalie's death had never reached her, so they met in heaven unexpectedly, these two ; another perfect joy amidst the joys that awaited them after the judgment.

And now all was ready. The hearse that was to carry the Sister of Charity to her last resting-place was the poorest of the poor, the hearse of a pauper, as became the servant of the poor ; but the Cross of the Legion of Honour, which she had never worn in life, was placed upon the pall, and round it a military escort formed a guard of honour. Thus right royally she went forth amidst her people, as befitted one who had reigned over them by divinest right of sacrifice and love.

By a delicate instinct of tenderness for the living and sympathy with the feelings of the dead, the Community desired that their Mother should pass through the midst of those poor whom she had loved so dearly, making one more visitation of her diocese, as they were wont to say, on this

her last journey. Instead, therefore, of going direct to the church, the procession wound through the narrow streets where Sœur Rosalie had long been a familiar presence, and where, the people said, 'she had left a virtue.' Everywhere, as the hearse came in sight, men and women fell upon their knees as if to receive her blessing.

At Père Lacordaire's funeral a peasant cried out in the crowd, 'We had a king, and we have lost him!' The same cry was going up from many hearts to-day as that lowly coffin passed out of view, 'We had a queen, and we have lost her!'

Paris was very grand that morning, and Sœur Rosalie, if she was permitted to look down upon the city, must have been consoled for many other days when it had made her sad; when these same men who were stepping with mournful tread behind her funeral-car had been slaughtering one another and sending blood flowing through the streets. It was more like the triumphal pageant of a sovereign, or the apotheosis of some hero, than the funeral of a humble religious.

As it had been with her in life, so it was in death: all distinction of rank and class was effaced in her presence, and in this last act of homage to her virtues society gave a magnificent example of

that equality which the Revolution preaches, but which the Gospel alone induces men to practise ; rich and poor, gentle and simple, walked side by side indiscriminately, drawn together by the noblest bond that can unite men, a common worship for whatsoever things are pure and lovely and brave and of good report, for innocence and courage and self-sacrifice. Courtiers were there representing the sovereign ; the Empress sent her chamberlain to lay flowers on the grave of her friend ; ministers and ambassadors were there, functionaries of every rank, military men and officers in the navy, soldiers and sailors, lawyers, doctors, financiers, merchants, artists, tradesmen, learned professors, journalists, and politicians of every party : all differences were set aside, all strife was at rest to-day. Strangers who saw the vast concourse—forty thousand men, marching bare-headed in serried ranks through the city—asked what great event was being commemorated, and learned with surprise that it was only a nun who was being carried to her grave. A crowd was waiting at the gate of the cemetery to meet her. As the hearse passed in, a poor woman rushed forward and laid her sick child against the coffin, praying out loud to Sœur Rosalie to heal it. When they reached the place set aside in Mont

Parnasse for the burying-ground of the Sisters of Charity, the mayor stood forward by the open grave, and, in the name of the Faubourg St. Marceau and of all the people, said a few words, made eloquent by the emotion that broke his voice. The last prayers were said, the last blessing given, and then the crowd dispersed and went back to its busy life, for a moment interrupted and solemnised by a sacred emotion. A little group of poor people alone lingered on, weeping and praying till night-fall, when the guardian of the cemetery told them they must go.

If love did but reign over us here below, this life would be a heaven on earth, for love is the manna that souls are hungering for ; it is the factor that moves the world.

The love that burned in Sœur Rosalie's heart was so strong that it set the spark alight in the most selfish ; the coldest took fire, the hardest melted in its glow. For the long spell of half a century this flame, like a sacred altar-fire, burned steadily in the midst of her people ; then it flickered and went out. France heard, one cold spring morning, that Sœur Rosalie had finished her day's work, and died and gone to

heaven. So large was the place she filled, and so supreme was her influence, that it seemed as if the work she had set going must now come to a standstill. But it was not so. Others, consumed like herself by the divine passion of charity, took up the burden, and went on with the interrupted service. The convent of the Rue de l'Épée de Bois continued to be a centre of help for the surrounding population. It ceased, indeed, to be the central point of interest and activity that it had been in Sœur Rosalie's time ; but her spirit lived on there, her example shone like a beacon-light, her name was a watchword, rallying the strong to the rescue of the weak, bidding the sorrowful ones take hope.

Her picture was to be seen in every garret—sometimes the only ornament of the blank wall, sometimes side by side with a crucifix or a Madonna. A year after her death, her bust in marble was, with permission from the Emperor, at the prayer of the inhabitants, placed in the great hall of the Mairie of the 12th Arrondissement. The installation was performed with great pomp of ceremonial and every manifestation of popular love and respect. For five-and-twenty years the bust remained the pride and ornament of the district, and during that time her *œuvre* flourished. Then a change came.

The Empire fell, and the Republic rose. The talismanic words, 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,' were blazoned on the public edifices and over the porticoes of the churches. Freedom was the watchword of the hour; a new era had dawned on the world; humanity was to be emancipated from the slavery that degraded it under the old order of things; under the new order, everybody was to be free—free to do evil, to persecute the Church, to make war on God, and drive out His servants from their homes. For the others—for those who worshipped Him, and followed His laws—there was to be no freedom. It was only by degrees the people found this out. At first they believed in the writing on the wall; but the prophets of the new *régime* came in good time to translate the legend to them. They wanted no God tyrannising over them with His Commandments: He had had His day, and now He must go. They drove away first one group of His servants and then another, and then it was the turn of Sœur Rosalie's Sisters.

One lovely summer's morning the Faubourg St. Marceau was making holiday. It was the distribution of prizes at the Sisters' of Charity. Five hundred little scholars in trim white frocks were reaping the reward of the year's diligence. They

were a merry company; even those who drew no prizes had their share in the day's glory, for they took their part in the glees and canticles that all were singing in presence of M. le Curé and many other notable personages invited with the parents to assist at the distribution. Those amongst the little choristers who had won distinction or reward carried away brightly-bound books or wreaths of white roses, or crowns of green and gold laurel on their learned little heads. As they trotted home they made the dingy streets gay with their white frocks and pinafores and shining garlands, and their chatter and laughter. All the faubourg turned out to see the glad procession pass. There were happy dreams that night on hard pillows in many a poor garret. But a rude awakening was in store for them. The reign of Freedom had decided to do away with these innocent coronations, and next day there came a decree ordering the Sisters of Charity to leave their convent, and within fifteen days to clear out their children and their sick, their infirm old men and women, and all belonging to them, from the Rue de l'Epée de Bois.

The decree fell on the whole faubourg like a bombshell. It meant not merely the expulsion of a band of harmless and devoted women from their

home, but the turning adrift into the streets over one thousand of the most helpless of God's creatures. At one fell blow the labour of eighty years was destroyed. The consternation of the people was so great that for a moment they were stunned ; they knew that there was no appeal. The Government had dealt the stroke at the right moment. It was the dead season, when all who might have helped were out of town. Paris—rich, money-giving Paris—was away, either in its châteaux, or bathing on fashionable beaches, or drinking the waters of healing springs. After the first shock, however, the people stood up, and swore that this work of iniquity should not be done while they were there to prevent it. Some twelve or fifteen brawny fellows marched off to the convent.

'*Ma Sœur*,' said a grimy smith, the spokesman of the deputation, 'it seems the Government has turned you out. Now, how much money will it take to hire premises and keep you going for a year ?'

'Alas ! less than eighty thousand francs would not do it,' replied the Superioress.

'Then cheer up, Sisters ! By *Sœur Rosalie*, you shall have the money ! Call your friends together, and count on us. There are no traitors in the faubourg.'

The Sisters began their packing, and their champions went forth and set about getting the money for them. It was as if Sœur Rosalie herself had risen from the grave, and was walking 'the diocese' as in old times, visibly present, her voice audible, her spirit firing all hearts, conducting the generous movement with that calm wisdom and energy that were her special characteristics. The chivalrous fellows, who were pledged to find the money, went round the faubourg asking for eighty thousand francs as confidently as if the getting were a mere question of asking, as if they did not know that the collected capital of the entire district could not have made up eighty thousand francs !

For three days the collection went on ; heavy copper coins and bright silver ones came dropping in with bountiful rapidity. Then Paris outside the faubourg heard of what was going on : 'Sœur Rosalie's *œuvre* was threatened, and money was wanted to save it.' In less than one week *a hundred thousand francs* were paid in to the evicted Sisters ! A loud 'Hurrah !' rang through the faubourg.

But there was a good deal to be done yet, in order to complete Sœur Rosalie's triumph. A

building had to be found to lodge the Sisters and their family of a thousand members. This was no easy matter, and for a moment it looked as if they would be forced to leave the neighbourhood and pitch their tent in some distant quarter. But Sœur Rosalie loved her wicked faubourg too well to abandon it. She sent her kinsman, M. Eugène Rendu, to the rescue ; she led him one day, unexpectedly, to a deserted tan-yard close by the old convent—a long straggling block of buildings, with dependencies, and a vast square in the centre. The buildings were in a dilapidated condition ; but they were spacious enough, and otherwise easily adaptable to their new destination. The tan-yard was hired. The next thing was to find an architect of goodwill brave enough to fly in the face of the enemy, and undertake the necessary alterations, and compromise himself as a clerical. ‘Our Mother will send us some one,’ said the Sisters confidently, and they began to consider, with some friends called in for council, where they had best turn to look for this man of goodwill. They were interrupted by the portress coming to say that a lady wished to speak with the Supérieure in the parlour.

‘*Ma Sœur*,’ said the visitor, ‘I want to know if

I can be of any use to you in this trouble. I owe a great debt to Sœur Rosalie. When my son was at the point of death, she saved him by her prayers. There is nothing in the world he would not do for her Sisters. He is an architect, and very clever at his profession; is there any use you can put him to?’

The lady’s name was Jourdain. She was that mother who, distraught with grief, had come, thirty years before, to entreat Sœur Rosalie to pray over her child. That child now came to pay his debt. He repaired, and in a measure reconstructed, the buildings, and made them ready for occupation in an incredibly short time. When asked for the bill of what the Sisters owed him, M. Jourdain replied : ‘It is I who am in their debt; they owe me nothing.’

All that remained to be done now was to furnish the house. The Faubourg proved here again that, as Sœur Rosalie used to say, its heart was better than its head. It gave out of its poverty with that cheerful alacrity which makes the poorest gifts so precious. It brought tables and chairs; sometimes there was a leg wanting, or some other trifling flaw; it brought pots and jugs, and other odds and ends of presents to ‘our Mother.’

By the month of November everything was ready. The Cardinal Archbishop of Paris was invited to inaugurate the new schools and preside at the reopening. It was one of those festivals of earth to which the angels are glad to be invited. Sœur Rosalie must certainly have been a degree happier in heaven that day than she was the day before. There were one hundred and fifty more children at the *rentrée* than when the school had broken up, and the population were celebrating her triumph over her enemies and theirs like a family festival, as in truth it was. They had saved from destruction the work of her life, and had proved to her that she still lived in their grateful memory. Her *crèche* was still to be full of babies, as when she was there to dandle them; her children were to be taught in the schools, her young girls watched over by the *Patronage*, the aged and infirm sheltered, and the sick ministered to in her infirmary.

The white cornettes, like carrier-doves, still flutter up and down the faubourg, carrying a virtue through the noisy thoroughfares, brightening the slimy cellar, painting sunbeams on the black attic-wall, purifying the crowded *chambrée*, redeeming all vile and hateful things with their innocence and love.

We are told—and the tradition is so beautiful I think it must be true—that some of the anthems which the Church sings in our day were sung by our Lord and His disciples in the Temple two thousand years ago. What a wonder it must have been to hear Him sing! To hear that voice leading the choir, the Eternal Word uttering Itself in praise to the Father, and making supplication for the sinful multitude around! But the multitude heard without hearing. They distinguished nothing but an ordinary voice, perhaps more than ordinarily clear and tuneful; they were deaf to the divine harmony of those tones to which the angels up in heaven were hearkening enraptured; they heard the melody, but they missed the message.

As it was then, so it is now. He is singing to us still, as in the days when He went up to the Temple and sang out loud with His dear human voice. He sings to us in all His works: in the roll of the forest, in the surge of the sea, in the mystic dance of the mountains; He sings to us in our own hearts, in sorrow and in joy, in failure, in strife, in disappointment; He is singing to us from the hearts of those we love; but, like the Jews, we miss the voice within the voice. If we hear Him in the vibrating stillness of the night,

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when star calleth unto star, it only lulls us to softer slumbers, like some faint echo of Olympian music. If we hear Him in a life of holiness, of martyr-deeds, in a glorious death, we are, perhaps, thrilled for one moment to more awakened life, or we stand and listen, as to the sound of martial music from a battle-field, to which we have no call. It is a delusion. We are called. That trumpet-blast is calling us to the rescue of those who are perishing in the fight. Let us be up and doing; for it may be that in the measure of our response we shall answer for their life or death.

MADAME SWETCHINE.

MADAME SWETCHINE.

‘ WORDS, idle words !’ cries the poet ; and yet, what more powerful agents for weal or woe, for good or evil, do we possess than these same words at which he thus rudely scoffs ?

Comparing the power of words as wielded by the speaker and the writer, the preponderance would seem, at first sight, to be considerably on the side of the latter ; for the words of the writer endure in tangible form, and may go on reiterating themselves with the same force and effect for generations, while those of the speaker are like the sighing of the breeze and the roar of the tempest : when they have delivered their message, they die away into silence. But silence is sometimes a kindling element of speech, it is the atmosphere where the voices of the unseen are audible, and where words are electrified into actions. This is what constitutes the great power of the spoken word : it is electric ; it goes straight to the heart and brain of the hearer, chal-

lenging him, taking hold of him, and, by eliciting immediate response, committing him to action. Spoken words are living agents, remedial, hurtful, incandescent, paralysing ; they set the current of action flowing, and they arrest it ; they inflict wounds, and they heal them ; they are a tremendous vital power. If we glance back at our personal experience, we shall see that our lives have, as a rule, been far more directly influenced by what people have said to us than by what they have done to us ; that we have been made happy or unhappy far more frequently by the words than by the actions of our fellow-creatures. Some of our bitterest sorrows have been caused by unkind words, and most of them have been alleviated by kind ones ; our hardest struggles and fiercest temptations have been made better and worse to us by words. The wise, sweet, seasonable words spoken to us from armchairs and at chimney-corners have been amongst the most powerful and effective sermons ever preached to us. The value of sympathetic words as an auxiliary in the trials and heartaches of life is absolutely incalculable. This is a great mystery, this power of the tongue, and when the day comes for measuring the hidden forces that have influenced the destinies of the world, it may be that we shall be surprised to

see how much more, comparatively speaking, has been accomplished for mankind by the words that have left no written record, than by those that have lived on in the pomp of printed books.

This service of the tongue, the ministry of words spoken in the quiet privacy of home, falls specially to the lot of woman, whose mission it is to guide men as the angels do, 'making their presence always felt, but seldom seen,' says Frederic Ozanam. It has been hers from the beginning of Christianity, when the divine chivalry of the Gospel rehabilitated woman, and raised her from being man's slave to be his equal and helpmate, when Apostles wrote letters to 'elect ladies' who 'walked in the truth,' and drew their inspired narrative from the lips of the woman 'full of grace' who pondered in her heart the words of the Word Himself; it is her mission still in our own day, when men's faith, rudely buffeted and strained by their own passionate denials and rebellious scepticism, needs more imperiously than ever the testimony of woman's faith, and the support of that believing heart which alone combats unbelief triumphantly.

Amongst the women of these later times who have exercised this service of the tongue with wide and fruitful results, Sophie Soymonoff, better known

to the world as Madame Swetchine, holds a place preëminently her own. Born at the close of the year 1782, she was, as it were, the outcome of two epochs, as she was destined to be the representative of two nationalities. Catharine II. was reigning in Russia, and, under her vigorous sway, the torpid empire of the Czars seemed on the eve of awaking from the sleep of barbarism to pursue those civilising conquests which it had begun under Peter the Great. France was already heaving with the throes of that Revolution of which Europe still feels the shock, and whose progress Russia was watching with an interest only the more intense because its utterance was checked by those deep-laid fibres of inherited fear which made sympathy with the wrongs of nations high treason for a loyal Muscovite. Potemkin was at the height of his power, but Catharine was calling round her the most cultivated and trustworthy men of the empire to aid her in forming the genesis of a new era, and amongst these her choice fell upon M. Soymonoff, a quiet scholarly man, who lived amongst his books at Moscow. He was named to the perilous and honourable post of private secretary to the Empress, and removed at once to St. Petersburg, where he took up his abode in the Palace of the Hermitage with

his two little daughters. Sophie, the elder, was seven years old at the time. The strength of her character even at this early age is revealed to us by two traits mentioned by her biographer, M. de Falloux. When about eight years old she was seized with a great longing to possess a watch, a very ambitious desire for a child in those days, and her father promised that on her eighth birthday she should have one. The days were counted with impatience, and when at last the great day came, Sophie's delight in her gift was rapturous ; but suddenly the thought occurred to her that it would be a fine thing to give it up. She went straight to her father and said : ' I have been thinking that there is something even better than having a watch, it is to make the sacrifice of it ;' and she put the longed-for gift into M. Soymonoff's hand. He looked at her for a moment, then, without saying a word, locked up the watch in his desk, and Sophie went back to her dolls.

Her father, who was an amateur of bronzes, statues, &c., had a collection of mummies in a cabinet near his library. Sophie was in mortal fear of these mummies, and used to run past the door without daring to look in at them. She became suddenly ashamed of her weakness, and

determined to conquer it ; so one day she walked straight up to one of the dreaded creatures, seized it in her arms, and hugged it with such violence that she and the mummy fell to the ground. The noise brought her father into the cabinet, where he found the child half fainting from terror and exhaustion. But she had conquered her fears, and never again had the slightest return of them.

Events, meantime, had progressed rapidly in France. The breath of the Revolution, which was blowing from that central furnace to surrounding nations, had travelled to Russia, and penetrated even the sacred precincts of the palace, where the sympathy of courtiers was no longer paralysed by dread of the sovereign's frown. It had become the fashion, in fact, to applaud the triumph of those grand principles in whose name the nation had risen against the ancient *régime* ; and now the rights of man were discussed freely at the Hermitage, where it was *bien porté* to weep over the wrongs of an oppressed people in the presence of the greatest autocrat of the world. This indirect education produced its effect on little Sophie's mind, and her father was startled on coming home one day to find the schoolroom ablaze with wax lights, the illumination having been extemporised by his daughter in

honour of the taking of the Bastille and the release of the French captives.

At the age of fourteen Sophie was fluent in Russian, English, French, German, and Italian ; she was fairly advanced in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and had acquired a rare proficiency in music and painting. The one item omitted in the list of her accomplishments was religion ; her only notion of God and her relative duties as a creature were gathered from the pageants and empty forms of the Greek ceremonial.

She was sixteen when Catharine II. died, struck down in the midst of those schemes of pleasure and ambition which she pursued with the same restless ardour to the last. Paul I. succeeded to the throne, and Sophie Soymonoff was named maid of honour to the Empress Marie. No greater contrast could have been found to the violent and imperious Catharine than this gentle young princess, who reigned over all hearts by her loveliness and sweetness, subduing even the brutal temper of her husband, whose rage fell in her presence when the stoutest of his boyards fled or trembled. The young wife's angelic patience and abnegation amidst the trials which this half-mad egotist inflicted upon her was Sophie Soymonoff's first lesson in the school of

suffering, and her first initiation into the secret of the vanity of that phantom which the world calls happiness.

Her own path stretched out before her, flowery and smooth. Nature had dowered her with every womanly gift except the sovereign one of beauty. She was not merely plain ; she was ugly ; but the charm of her mind and the winning grace of her manner made you forget this, and she fascinated all who came in contact with her. Noble and wealthy, youthful suitors competed for her hand, but her father's choice fell upon General Swetchine. He was forty-two years of age when Sophie, at seventeen, became his wife. One trait will suffice to give the measure of the man to whom her destiny was intrusted.

Paul I., in one of those fits of rage which, while they lasted, resembled a diabolical possession, condemned a colonel of his Guard to the knout, and General Swetchine, then a young officer of the Imperial Guard, was charged with the execution of the sentence. At the appointed hour he presented himself at the Place d'Armes, where the condemned man, stripped to the waist, was bound to a pillar, while the executioner stood beside him, waiting for the signal to strike. In-

stead of giving the word of command, the young officer went up to his colonel, and, handing him back his sword, 'The Emperor restores this to you,' he said, 'and sends you his pardon ; but you must leave St. Petersburg within an hour.'

He then walked back to the Emperor : 'Sire,' he said, 'I bring you my head. I have disobeyed your orders ; Colonel —— is free. I have given him back life and liberty. Strike me in his place.'

Paul seized him by the arm with both hands, but after a moment of fierce struggle, his better nature conquered. 'You have done well,' he cried, 'but see that this does not get wind in St. Petersburg.'

General Swetchine was not only brave and noble, as this incident proves ; he was a man of cultivated taste, and capable of appreciating the gifted young wife who was committed to his care. M. Soymonoff died soon after the marriage, and this grief, the first that Sophie had yet known, was the door through which God entered into her life, although He was not yet to take entire possession of it.

She now took a leading position at the Russian Court, which for a moment claimed to be the most brilliant in Europe. Many members of the old

noblesse, driven out of France by the Revolution, had sought shelter in Russia, where they met with cordial hospitality. The most exclusive houses opened their doors to them, and the *habitués* of Versailles found themselves nowhere more at home than in Madame Swetchine's *salon*. This period of calm social enjoyment was, however, abruptly brought to an end. The violence and cruelty of Paul roused a spirit of hatred in the minds of his courtiers, which culminated in a plot to murder him. The secret was communicated by the chief conspirator to General Swetchine, who answered the confidence in a manner worthy of him. The next day he was named senator, and the day after that deposed and dismissed the court in disgrace. Very shortly after this Paul disappeared mysteriously, and Alexander replaced him on the throne. His advent brought the rights of man again into fashion; a new era set in, and with it arose a healthy current that blew through the stagnant air of Muscovy, threatening for a moment the old corrupt system with death, suppressing great armaments, inaugurating a right of commerce, and opening the hitherto closed doors of office and honours to industry and talent. General Swetchine was not, however, recalled to any position in

the palace, and his wife's only link with the court now was her affection for the ex-Empress Marie, who sought her coöperation in carrying out numerous acts of benevolence.

Reading had always been Sophie's great delight, and now, at the age of nineteen, she found herself at leisure to devote a great portion of her time to it. The nomenclature of the books she read during this second year of her marriage alone includes a long list of Greek and Latin classics, as well as all the good English, French, and German authors of the eighteenth century. And we must remember that, with her, reading meant study ; every book left her hands carefully annotated, and whole volumes of closely-written extracts and commentaries showed how conscientiously she had appropriated the contents. This steady intellectual culture was preparing the soil for that spiritual seed of which, so far, the soul of the young student had been entirely bereft. But the sower who was to scatter the seed was now close at hand.

God sends certain souls into this world with such strong traits of family likeness that when they meet they at once recognise one another as kindred. Madame Swetchine met one of these kindred souls in the Comte de Maistre, ambas-

sador to St. Petersburg from the King of Sardinia. M. de Maistre was a man of genius, an accomplished diplomatist, and a Christian of the antique Roman type. Madame Swetchine's imagination was attracted at once by the power of his mind, while her soul was unconsciously drawn into sympathy with the religion which his austere and noble life faithfully embodied. It seems strange, indeed, that, young as she was, she should so long have withstood the influence of that master mind, and remained satisfied with the phantom of religion that she constructed for herself. Her first active step in the direction of truth was the changing her natural benevolence into reverent and practical love of the poor; her next, a drawing closer to God by prayer. Her mind was, however, as yet too firmly locked by prejudice to dream of breaking loose from the bonds of schism.

As time went on, each day accumulating the interests of her life, full of varied and noble pursuits, but also infringed upon by social claims that she gladly would have set aside, it became more and more difficult for Madame Swetchine to pursue her philosophical studies as closely and fully as she desired, so she induced General Swetchine to hire a country place, called the Campagne Bariat-

insky, where she proposed spending a year in complete solitude. There was a well-stocked library in the castle, and it was part of the plan of her campaign to digest the whole of this library before she returned to St. Petersburg. She confided her programme to M. de Maistre, who disapproved of it.

‘You will never arrive by the road you have chosen, madame,’ he wrote, in answer to her letter (July 31st, 1815). ‘You will kill yourself with fatigue ; you will groan without unction ; you will become a prey to I know not what arid vehemence, which will eat into the fibres of your heart, without ridding you either of your conscience or your pride. You are reading Fleury now, a man condemned by the Sovereign Pontiff, to know what you ought to think of the Sovereign Pontiff ; but, my good lady, when you have done with Fleury, I advise you to read Maretelli, who has refuted him ; you can then read Felronius against the Holy See ; and then, as an impartial judge, who hears both sides of the case, read the anti-Felronius, Abbé Zacharia ; these are only eight octavo volumes, a mere trifle. After that, madame, you will study Greek, so as to know precisely the meaning of that famous *Hege-monia* which St. Irene attributes to the Church of Rome in the third century, so that you may under-

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stand whether the word means *supremacy* or *principality*, *authority* or *jurisdiction* of the Church of Rome. Cardinal Orsini having undertaken to refute Fleury, found so many errors in him that he decided that a good ecclesiastical history would be the best refutation of a bad one, and therefore he set to work to write it. He died at the twenty-first volume in quarto, which does not finish the sixth century. Believe me, madame, read these twenty-one volumes, or else you will never have your mind at rest,' &c.

This letter, written in a spirit of ironical jesting, was interpreted by Madame Swetchine in literal earnest, and she at once set herself to follow out the plan of study to which M. de Maistre here dares her. The dark winter days and long winter nights found her at work on Fleury's twenty-four volumes to begin with, and 450 pages of closely-written notes testify to the conscientiousness with which she performed her task, the others following in due course. At the end of six months the triumph of faith was so far secured that a breach was made in the wall of unbelief; the divinity of our Lord became a self-evident truth to her, and she began to practise the Greek religion with great fervour. This dawn of faith could not, however, satisfy her soul, now drawn

by irresistible yearnings to the full light of truth. She gave herself up for hours each day to prayer and meditation, thus preparing herself for the grace that was at hand. We are left in ignorance of the precise moment and form in which it came to her. Her extreme dislike to speak of herself, or to reveal the secrets of her spiritual life, deterred her, no doubt, from keeping any notes of the travail of her mind at this time, and the only mention made of it is a few lines in volume 10 of her annotations of books made at the Campagne Bariatinsky :

‘August 31st, 1815. Blessed day ! when the mists of my mind were somewhat dispelled by the *fiat lux* which a heavenly voice sounded in the depths of my conscience. The unclouded light has not yet penetrated fully into the darkness, but the beam that heralds it shows me at least the road that I am to follow. My God, Thou dost grant me as many graces as I have opposed obstacles to them in my soul ! My God, may Thy will be done ! Inspire me, it is Thy truth that I am seeking, that I seem to have found, that I adore. Rather than go astray, let me die ! It is in the name of Thy Son Jesus Christ that I implore this grace ; it is through His Cross and Death that I hope to obtain it. Tuesday, a quarter to twelve.’

The only allusion as to how the battle went after this is a note scribbled in pencil on a stray bit of paper, not even inserted in a journal :

‘My last Greek communion in the chapel of St. Petersburg, June 29th, 1815, was made with the sole intention of obtaining the solution of those doubts that remained to me. God, in His goodness, did not fail in the choice of the means, and on the 27th October of the same year I made my abjuration.’

Her conversion was kept a secret for some time, out of consideration for General Swetchine. The convert made her first confession in her own drawing-room, with wide-open doors, and in terror every moment of being detected. This mystery, so repugnant for every reason to Madame Swetchine, might have been indefinitely prolonged had not an act of crying injustice on the part of the Emperor suddenly impelled her to sacrifice all considerations of prudence to an impulse of generosity. The Jesuits, driven out of France in the eighteenth century, had been received in Russia almost triumphantly by Catharine II., who placed them at the head of several colleges. Paul continued the same favour towards them; Alexander II. had opened to their zeal the heroic mission of Siberia,

and sought the counsel of some of the most distinguished members of the society, when, suddenly, his weak and troubled soul, tossed about between the morbid mysticism of Madame de Krüdener and the sterile doctrine of Greek orthodoxy, took fright at the growing influence of the order, and he issued a decree banishing every Jesuit at once from St. Petersburg and Moscow, and, after a short delay, from the empire altogether. M. de Maistre gave an eloquent voice to the indignation which this arbitrary measure awoke in all generous hearts, and his protest so far prevailed, that a sum of money and a set of furs were sent from the imperial treasury to each Jesuit before he started on the long winter's journey.

The publication of this ukase was the signal for Madame Swetchine to proclaim herself a Catholic. She drove at once to the convent where Father Rosaven lived, and placed herself at the disposal of the community in every way that her help could avail. The news of her conversion made a great sensation in St. Petersburg. To the surprise of all, especially of the culprit herself, the Emperor, who had hitherto treated her only with the regard which she received from every member of the imperial family, now drew her into a cordial inti-

macy, which soon ripened into friendship. But this friendship, which the Czar felt proud to proclaim on every occasion, awoke bitter jealousy amongst those who would gladly have won the same perilous prerogative. The most malignant hatred did not dare utter a word against Madame Swetchine herself, so it attacked her husband. The conspirators, whose overtures he had scornfully rejected, had not forgotten the affront, and were merely biding their time for revenge. An old grievance—some misdemeanour committed by a subaltern of the general's under his former administration—was raked up and malignantly distorted. He at first treated the calumny with contempt, but, finding that it was gaining credence, he announced his intention of leaving St. Petersburg. This was what his enemies wanted. The Emperor seemed pained and annoyed; but, with characteristic weakness, he let things go their way, and took a tearful leave of Madame Swetchine.

Although General Swetchine did not at once settle down definitely in France, his rupture with his own country as a home may be said to date from this departure; and we may now, passing over fluctuating events, follow Madame Swetchine into that adopted country where she was to find a

wider field of influence than had been open to her amidst the splendours of the Russian capital and its narrowing palace-walls.

Many old friends were waiting for her in Paris—*émigrés* who remembered her hospitality in St. Petersburg, and were glad to see her amongst them. The *salon* of the Duchess de Duras was one of the first that drew her within its circle. A pretty anecdote is told of her meeting there with Madame de Staël. They dined together ; but Madame Swetchine, with her usual timidity, had not dared during dinner to address the illustrious Frenchwoman, who, misunderstanding this reserve, went up to her when they had withdrawn to the *salon*, and said, ‘I have been told, madame, that you wished to make my acquaintance ; is this true?’ ‘Assuredly, madame,’ replied Madame Swetchine ; ‘but it is always for the king to speak first.’

General Swetchine hired a house in the Rue St. Dominique, looking south over a wide stretch of gardens that gave an air of country quiet to one of the most fashionable quarters of the city. In this charming home was formed, out of the rich and heterogeneous elements of Madame Swetchine’s social life, that *salon* which was eventually to become so influential.

A *salon* is a curious institution, made up of divers ingredients—some opposite, even antagonistic, but held together by a cohesive element which it is impossible to define. It is, indeed, rather a growth than an institution, for it cannot be founded or set up like a school or a party, but must come gradually into existence. One woman will create a *salon* where another, apparently better fitted to succeed, will fail ; the secret of the success and the failure alike baffling explanation. In the case of Madame Swetchine, no one who knew her had far to look for the charm which drew so many into her circle. It lay in her own individuality, in the beauty of her mind, which united the grasp and power of concentration of a man, with the delicate grace and subtle *esprit* of a woman. It lay, above all, in the rich tenderness and warmth of her heart. ‘An hour’s conversation with you illuminates my heart,’ wrote the Père Lacordaire to her in her old age ; and long before that golden harvest-time, the noblest minds of the day were conscious of the same illuminating charm, and came eagerly to enjoy it.

It was her gift of sympathy, far more than her brilliant intellectual gifts, that constituted Madame Swetchine’s great power. This sympathy was a

unique thing in the experience of all who proved it. It combined with every other perfect quality that supreme one of knowing no limitations ; you could never tire it out, you never came to the end of it, nothing was too high or too low for it to embrace. The learned and the simple, the foolish and the wise, the spiritual and the worldly-minded, all came to the fountain, and all received in the full measure of their need. It was not necessary to be interesting to interest Madame Swetchine ; you had only to want her. Whatever the story you had to tell—whether it was the whispered confidences of a guilty heart or the cry of a broken one, the embittered repining of failure, the querulous complaint of bodily ailments, of pecuniary troubles, or the jubilant song of happiness—that kind heart and sympathetic ear were open to all.

The *salon* of the Rue St. Dominique never assumed the character of a literary or a political, or even, in the strict exclusive sense, a religious *salon* ; it was a centre where minds and hearts met and expanded in genial intercourse. The *soirées* there were devoted chiefly to conversation on deep and interesting subjects ; but art had its place there too, and even the gay world its representatives. The serious *salon* was often enlivened

by the apparition of some young *élégante* on her way to a ball, and then it was charming to see the grace and attention with which the venerable lady, in her attire of Quaker-like simplicity, would turn to admire the fashionable toilette of her visitor—to see how the pupil of M. de Maistre, whose mind ‘loved to plunge into metaphysics as into a bath,’ would, when her criticism was invited, proceed gravely to examine and advise upon the details of a ball-dress. She was a woman womanly to the heart’s core, for all her masculine grasp of mind.

The motherly element was so strong in Madame Swetchine that all who drew near to her, old and young alike, felt themselves more or less in the filial relation towards her; but she had a special tenderness for the young, and was so full of indulgence for their faults and follies, that they gave her their confidence fearlessly. She made them feel that their troubles, their romances, all the individual circumstances of their lives, were of personal interest to her. This intense sympathy with the drama of life was the more remarkable in one who so revelled in its philosophy—whose relaxation was, as she said herself, a bath of metaphysics. But science and sentiment went hand in hand with Madame Swetchine—the one giving the impulse,

the other guiding and restraining it. Her mind preserved the freshness and responsive curiosity of youth into old age. Stored as it was with the garnered lore of early studies—philosophy, psychology, poetry, the wit and wisdom of many languages—there was room to the last on the tablets for any new-comer who had anything worth writing down. This capacity for interesting herself in other lives naturally unlocked their secrets to her, and she thus acquired an intimate and extensive knowledge of human nature and character that greatly enlarged her experience and widened the range of her judgment, while it rendered her sympathy more valuable and efficacious. From being directed by her head as well as inspired by her heart, her sympathy was not merely sensitive and emotional, soothing and sweet; it was also remedial and invigorating; it was full of anecdotes and tonics; it could be antagonistic, too, when this was the touch needed to dispel what was morbid or unreal in the suffering it aimed at alleviating.

Although her *salon* was the rendezvous of the most brilliant talkers of Europe, who listened to her with delight, it was never said of Madame Swetchine that she was 'a good talker.' The term would have been quite inadequate to convey a

true idea of what her conversation was, and, in a certain sense, misleading. Her words were too full of simplicity and wisdom to be what is commonly understood by 'clever.' Then she never cared to shine—to talk for the sake of talking; she loved best to listen. She was a wonderful listener. This power of listening was one of the great seductions of her conversation. Her silence was a compelling power in itself; it drew you out; it was so responsive that it inspired you. It encouraged the timid, sometimes stimulating them unawares to eloquence; it could rebuke, too; but it never intimidated. 'The smaller you were, the more she made of you,' says one who experienced her kindness. 'I have been shown into her *salon* when there was a group of celebrities about her, and before I had time to recover from my shyness, I found M. de Montalembert, or Donoso Cortez, or some other distinguished person drawing me quite naturally into the conversation.'

But delightful as she was in the midst of a brilliant circle, it was above all in *tête-à-tête* that Madame Swetchine's conversation was enjoyable. 'A talk with Madame Swetchine' was one of those comforts that those who had once tasted were always hungering for again. An old and

dear friend of hers, whose name is perhaps more widely known now than Madame Swetchine's, said to me, in speaking of these talks, 'The most infatuated lover did not long to be alone with his beloved more than I longed for a *tête-à-tête* with her. I used to feel a thrill of joy when I arrived and found her by herself, and felt I had a quarter of an hour to be alone with her.' Her very presence was restful. It was like getting into another atmosphere, where the storms are over, and the sun shining after rain. You found with her that 'half an hour's silence' that Père Gratry says we so seldom meet with in the heaven of souls; a luminous silence, full of peace. She had in her youth solved so many problems and weathered so many storms, that while still but midway through her course, Madame Swetchine spoke like one who had come out of the battle, and now sat in the serene glow of the sunset, watching with reverted gaze those who were still fighting in the glare and dust of the hot noon below. Apart from the grace and strength of her mind, the charm she exercised in intimate conversation arose in a great measure from her rare power of concentrating her interest on whatever claimed it at the moment. She gave herself up to you with a quiet energy of sympathy

that excluded every other preoccupation for the time being, and gave you that sense of repose which is incompatible with a listener whose attention is divided.

Next to her sympathy, nothing was so delicious as Madame Swetchine's praise. If sometimes she seemed a trifle lavish of it, this arose from her generous and sensitive appreciation of whatever was good and beautiful in others, and from her desire to give pleasure. It never, probably, occurred to her that any amount of admiration could be a cause of vanity ; for she was so invulnerable herself to the shafts of that petty vice that the praise of all the world left her perfectly unmoved. Those who sought her counsel in important temporal concerns were often amazed at the wisdom and shrewd practical sense she displayed in discussing them. It is not always men of business, properly so called, who are the safest guides in the intricate affairs of life ; their gaze is fixed on too narrow an horizon. It is often those whose eyes are withdrawn from temporal things, and fixed on the eternal, who see most clearly through the puzzles and cares of this world. But though her judgment was so sound, Madame Swetchine was extremely slow to exercise it in the affairs of others. It was part of

her ripe and discreet wisdom never to offer advice until she was asked for it. Timid by nature, humility had no doubt taught her that God only owes us the grace of inspiration when we are appealed to for an opinion, and when, consequently, interference becomes a duty. But though reluctant to advise, when she did speak the trumpet gave forth no uncertain sound. Her words had a spell of authority which few could resist.

Humility could not, however, blind Madame Swetchine to the fact that she possessed in no ordinary degree that *intelletto d'amore* which gives those endowed with it such a sway over the minds of men. She held it humbly as a talent for which she would have to account, and also as a prerogative which those who exercise must ransom at a price. Her door was literally besieged from morning till night by persons of all classes and ages, coming for that cup of living water which is as the elixir of life to human souls. Her own life was devoured and, to a certain extent, sacrificed to these ever-increasing demands, which she answered unflinchingly to the last, as we see by the *naïf* testimony of her butler Cloppet.

‘The more I think of it, Monsieur,’ he writes to M. de Falloux, ‘the more convinced I am that his

dear lady shortened her days in her desire to render services to every class of society, and in making herself the slave of all. Here is a proof of it. In the morning, after Mass, when I was serving her breakfast, she would say to me, "I am very busy, I have a great deal of writing to do, and many things behindhand ; I forbid the door to everybody, without exception. I beg of you, *let no one in.*" Then, on rising from the table, she would say to me, with a smile, "You know, Cloppet, if there were anybody who positively *wanted* to see me, any poor person who came from a distance and could not conveniently come again, you will let them in." A moment after, she would turn back from the drawing-room to say, "I forgot that Madame So-and-so asked to see me alone." By and by one or two letters would come, begging for a rendezvous to see her alone ; then it would be some one just arrived from the country, or passing through, who begged to be let in for one minute, which lasted till the next came. Then, at three o'clock, her door was open to anybody, and the crowd came and stayed till seven. I have many a time seen her go to table worn out with the fatigues of the day, and people were flocking to the house again before the *soirée* began. Often

she would come away from the table without having finished her dinner. This went on from six o'clock in the morning till one, and sometimes two o'clock, after midnight. And yet she lived amidst friends who loved and cherished her ; but they did not see that they were wearing her out, especially during the last five or six years. Ah, Monsieur, everybody was so happy to see and to hear her ; for I don't fear to be gainsaid when I declare that she had a most charming conversation. She had a talent of speaking to every class in their own language. She knew so well how to comfort the poor in their wretchedness, and the rich in their domestic griefs, to cheer up poor afflicted folk, to encourage mothers of families who came for advice about their children. I used to see those who came to her for consolation going away with a cheerful countenance.'

Cloppet said the simple truth when he declared that his mistress made herself the slave of all. The forbearance which she displayed to those who intruded so remorselessly on her time was even exercised with the same imperturbable gentleness towards a class of offenders who generally receive small pity—the bores. 'How often,' says M. de Falloux, 'we have seen some scientific don come

in and take possession of her *soirée*, and devote it to airing his own theories! Sometimes, just when the conversation had become interesting and she had warmed to it with delight, the door would open to admit some *blasé* loungeur, or some humble acquaintance, a stranger to society and topics of general interest; but never did these bores, these tyrants, or inopportune intruders, provoke the slightest sign of annoyance from the hostess. The humble guest was never sacrificed to the proud one, the bore to the entertaining person, the poor to the rich.'

Antagonistic elements came together sometimes in this sympathetic circle, and afforded play to Madame Swetchine's kindly tact. M. X. and M. Z., for instance, were on a permanent war footing. If M. X. arrived first, he took possession of the hearth-rug and held forth on some knotty point concerning Oriental languages; but the moment M. Z. appeared on the threshold the lecturer collapsed, and, skulking round by the armchairs, made for the door. The hostess would follow him with a kindly glance, and sometimes pluck up courage to pick a fight with the conqueror.

It would, however, be doing a great injustice to Madame Swetchine to present but this one aspect

of her life, or let it be supposed that her *salon* was her only sphere of usefulness and activity. Her sympathies and service were by no means confined to her own class ; her devotion to the poor was to the full as tender and generous. When she came to reside in Paris the Abbé Desjardins, her confessor, put her at once in communication with the most interesting *œuvres* in the capital, and she became his most valuable helpmate in his labours of charity. Her morning began at daybreak, and before eight o'clock she had made her round of visits to the poor, toiling up to their garrets in spite of her painful infirmities, that she might have the pleasure of offering her gifts in person, and those words of love and encouragement that are more helpful often than gold and silver. For she would take as much pains to give them pleasure as to relieve their necessities, employing all her ingenuity in finding out what they would best like for their fête-day: for an old soldier she would procure a picture of some battle in which he had fought ; for a sailor it would be a sea-fight ; to the sick she would carry pots of flowers, and arrange them carefully in the best place, as if it were for some dear friend. In truth, the poor were her dear friends, and this was the secret of her influ-

ence with them. She looked upon them as her benefactors, and when she received any special grace or blessing, her gratitude took the form of some act of kindness towards them. On being relieved from grievous anxiety about her sister, the Princess Gargarin, she sent off Cloppet to ask the Sisters of Charity for another poor person to look after, and when he returned with the gift of a paralytic old woman, Madame Swetchine exclaimed in delight: 'Now, Cloppet, we will call this one "Ma Sœur!"' And the paralytic never went by any other name in the household.

A poor couple who were adopted as a thank-offering for the peace after the Crimean War were christened 'La Paix.' The refuge for the deaf and dumb claimed, perhaps, the first place amongst the many charitable institutions that shared Madame Swetchine's helpful interest. She took into her house a beautiful deaf and dumb girl called Parisse, who, for a time, by her violent temper and waywardness, severely exercised her benefactress's patience; but Madame Swetchine, by dint of sweetness and wisdom, triumphed at last over the untamed nature, and Parisse became devoted to her. Madame Swetchine took her *chère muette* with her in her visits of charity, and used to speak

of the comfort it was to have the support of her strong young arm without being obliged to talk.

Her annual visit to Vichy, which for years had become a necessity, was always the occasion of some new charitable interest. One day she saw a little boy begging on the roadside ; he was lame, paralysed in one arm, epileptic, his whole appearance repulsive to the last degree. Madame Swetchine took pity on the poor outcast, conveyed him herself to the hospital, where she undertook to pay a pension for him. Gilbert became passionately attached to her. Every year he stood waiting on the platform to welcome her with the wild demonstrative joy of a dumb animal. When she was leaving he would watch the train out of sight, and stand for hours looking up at the windows of her deserted house with streaming eyes. In the midst of her immense correspondence with the leading minds of the day she made time to write to the poor simpleton, giving him rules of conduct, lecturing, and encouraging him. He made great progress under her fostering care and the kindness of the Sisters ; but their efforts could not triumph over disease, and after many years of a life of great suffering poor Gilbert died, followed even beyond death by the tender compassion of her whom he called his angel.

She had made provision for him in her will, in the event of his outliving her, and now rendered him the last service in her power, as the following letter tells us. It is to the Superioress of the Sisters of Charity at Vichy :

‘My dear, kind Sister,—I cannot tell you what a grief this is to me. I really loved that poor child, whose heart, in its simplicity, must have been so agreeable to our Lord. I am consoled by the reflection that he is now set free from suffering, and by the thought of his increased fervour, which struck me, this season. My dear Sister, your indulgence, your compassion, and that of your Sisters, above all, your example, were the means granted by the divine mercy to secure his salvation. I thank you all once again for your goodness to this poor dear boy, in whose intercession I place great confidence. We have reversed our relations : a few days ago I was a support to him ; now he is one to me.’

We have glanced at the twofold character displayed in Madame Swetchine’s life, that of the accomplished woman of the world and the devout Christian lady. Her relations with many distinguished men have also been hinted at, but her

friendship with Père Lacordaire forms in itself so remarkable an episode, that we cannot, even in this cursory sketch, dismiss it with a passing mention.

Those were troubled times on which the Russian convert had fallen in France. The Revolution, after having broken off violently from the Church, had thrown a bridge across the gulf, and was showing a disposition to treat on favourable terms with the enemy. But the time had come for the Church to assert herself, and secure a footing of independence upon some more solid foundation than the favour of a government whose very existence was imperilled by the vice of its origin. The Catholic party rallied itself for a vigorous effort, M. de Montalembert and the Abbé Lacordaire unfurling the flags as standard-bearers. At the most perilous hour of the crisis Lacordaire and Madame Swetchine met, and his sense of the importance of that meeting he thus expresses to her: 'You appeared to me between those two dissimilar periods of my life as the Angel of the Lord appears to a soul hovering between life and death, between heaven and earth.'

The character of her relations with the illustrious Dominican forms an incident unique in the history of the Church. If the friendships of St. Jerome and St. Paula, and many other parallels, suggest them-

selves to us, we are reminded at once that in the present instance the relations were reversed, the Christian woman of the world being the counsellor and the religious the one counselled. Madame Swetchine was fifty, the Abbé Lacordaire thirty, when their acquaintance began. She assumed towards him at once the position of a mother, and the tender wisdom with which she watched over him through a long course of years and most critical circumstances forms a rare and beautiful example of woman's highest mission on earth. When the young priest, loyal but overbold in his Utopian dreams, went to plead his cause before the Holy See, Madame Swetchine followed him with bated breath, and pleaded with him against dreaded possibilities as if her life had hung upon the issue. As we see her wrestling with God for this child of her adoption, we are reminded of the mother of St. Athanasius crying out with that impetuosity of faith which tolerates no denial : ' I have but one son, and with God's help I will have that only son a true son of the Church !'

We know how Lacordaire rewarded this maternal anxiety for his highest good. ' You were given to me,' he wrote, ' at the most trying moment of my career, and, thanks to you, I got through a pass by

which I shall never return. What I had missed up to that time was not so much friendship as counsel. For ten years I had been directing my life by myself.'

When combined efforts succeeded in interrupting the conferences of Notre Dame, and the Abbé Lacordaire withdrew to Rome, there in solitude to strengthen himself for future combats, Madame Swetchine urged him to devote as much time as possible to study, so as to sink deep the foundations of the great work, as yet unrevealed, which, from the first, she felt convinced he was to accomplish.

'Profit well by this precious solitude,' she wrote to him; 'your studies appear to me excellent. Are there no books that would help you? Tell me what you want or wish for, without considering whether you will wish for it to-morrow. I am glad to be your "man of business;" every office is included in real friendship; it is multiplicity in unity, as our Germans say.'

The publication of M. de Lamennais's *Affaires de Rome* was a call to the Abbé Lacordaire to emerge from this studious solitude and break the silence to which he had condemned himself. M. de Lamennais's book was not merely an insult to the

Church, it was a violent appeal to the popular passions of the day. 'I would rather be in chains than do what he has done!' cried Lacordaire in holy anger; and his loyal heart gave utterance a few days later to that magnificent defence of the Holy See, entitled *Lettre sur le Saint Siège*. He forwarded it direct to Madame Swetchine, who, as soon as she had read it, took it to the Archbishop of Paris. Monseigneur du Quélon considered the tone of the defence too uncompromising, and shrank from allowing it to be published. Madame Swetchine wrote at once to soothe the ardent spirit of the writer, and prepare him for the disappointment.

'I read your MS. with delight,' she says; 'I found it full of passages of incomparable beauty, and of a charm all your own. Your standpoint is mine. My entire separation from the world, with which I am profoundly disheartened, leaves me accessible, really, to no interests except those of the Church in which I have taken refuge. . . . Her policy, as developed by you, appears to me to be that of the common Father of the faithful, and in substance my adhesion to it is as complete as my admiration for the greater portion of it. But this tribute, sincere and just, does not prevent me, dear

friend, from seeing that certain parts here and there would have required closer finish. . . . Some of the ideas also strike me as equivocal, wanting in that rigorous precision, that absolute rectitude, which we exact from the priesthood ; slight blemishes, which it only needs your presence to correct. . . .’ This criticism, and the prohibition of the Archbishop, were accepted in that spirit of magnanimous humility which lent so pure a lustre to the genius of the future son of St. Dominic.

The Abbé Lacordaire held on his divinely illuminated way, greater in obedience than in his grand intellectual gifts, and remained perfectly silent until the voice of authority called him back to France and bade him reascend the pulpit of Notre Dame. But his mission as an orator alone did not satisfy Madame Swetchine. ‘You must have a definite position ; you must not remain alone,’ was the ever-recurring burden of her song. And when the conferences were over, and the preacher went back to Rome, she still argued against this persistent seclusion : ‘Yes, solitude, but not isolation. Solitude, with its calm and freedom and full possession of self ; but isolation would rob you of many subjects, and, above all, of the contact with men which is so valuable to those who are to live

with them and for them. In every condition and place those divine words find their application, "It is not good for man to be alone." By and by, when irrevocably you will have become a master in your turn, when age and experience shall have ripened your rare talents, even then, my friend, it will still not be good for you to be alone. Do what you will, you must have disciples who will acknowledge your immediate influence, who will be confided to you by the supreme authority, or else a family of brethren with a common father over them. I have an ardent desire for your perfection, but I am bent on no fixed form regarding it. "Serve God, and do as you like." The world, solitude, preaching, writing, dignities in the Church, entire renunciation—all seem to me equally good and full of blessed opportunities—all except isolation, when, separated from everybody, you will run the greatest danger of all in the impossibility of separating from yourself. My dear friend, do you forgive me? Truly my friendship must be utterly incorruptible to withstand the seduction of your will.' 'Love me always, and don't weary of the storms of my soul,' entreated Lacordaire of this incorruptible friend; and the answer came in a fuller assurance of tenderness: 'I cannot doubt

but that your soul, so mysterious, so pure, so simple, is a special object of divine predilection. My joy would have been to praise you always, but my affection has no need of this ; it may be even that these violent shocks to which you expose it now and then renew the first adoption with fresh strength. Like Rachel, I might call you the child of my sufferings, and you know that suffering does not dishearten us poor mothers.'

Madame Swetchine never shrank from the responsibility of her influence over the Abbé Lacordaire's mind, but when with childlike *abandon* he urges her to exercise it freely, assuring her that no one has a like power to guide and enlighten him, she answers deprecatingly: 'If at times I have accepted this power that you attribute to me, it was without confidence in myself, and simply that another might not seize it. I made myself your ballast, and I held you by the tail of your coat, so as to slacken your pace when it threatened to become too rapid or too brusque.'

The young priest's strong predilection for the isolated life he was leading in Rome was unexpectedly favoured by an invitation from the authorities there to preach the Lent in the church of St. Louis, a circumstance which, giving the sanc-

tion of obedience to personal inclination, justified, in Madame Swetchine's eyes, a choice of which she had hitherto disapproved. 'I have never been possessed by any *idée fixe* as to where your perfection lay,' she wrote to him, 'so that this indefinite separation, which may be eternal, though it grieves my heart, does not disturb my mind. So long as you are given up wholly to God and to His Church, the "do as you will" escapes from my heart with an impetuosity that guarantees its sincerity.'

Though no earthly consideration could induce Madame Swetchine to refrain from speaking out the truth to her friend, this frankness cost her a great deal; she even sometimes feared her uncompromising opposition might prove too great a strain for his impetuous nature, and she pleads with him for forgiveness. 'It is truth, my child, which has saved our friendship We have said to one another everything that could be said. It may be that we have not always understood each other; but faith can scatter the clouds and sees clearly through all obscurities My child, my friend, let us respect this link and never break it. When we are young, we do not realise the havoc and the grief of a broken friendship. Even when it has not been altogether our fault, it is a painful

weight, and conscience lies so near the heart that whatever affects the one must trouble the other.'

Nothing ever came to trouble this friendship, which had its root in God. The very differences of opinion which divided them were but an additional element of interest between them. Though Madame Swetchine never mixed herself in politics, she had, as may be supposed, very well-defined political principles, but so finely balanced was her judgment that Père Lacordaire declares he knew her long and intimately before he discovered on which side her personal sympathies lay. How little her legitimist views were tainted in his opinion by 'that deplorable idolatry which has lost the house of Bourbon' is evident from such remarks as the following, numbers of which occur in his letters to her: 'I am going to pray for you before the relics of the three Kings (at Cologne); you would rather they were three shepherds, but that I cannot help.'

The quiet tenor of Madame Swetchine's life, full of intellectual interest and the charm of innumerable friendships, was unexpectedly interrupted by a most painful incident. The malignant jealousy which had worked against General Swetchine under the Emperor Alexander had found freer

play in his absence under Nicholas. An old grievance of some thirty years' date was again raked up, the mind of the Czar was poisoned against him, and one winter's day the post brought him an imperial order to leave Paris forthwith, and take up his abode in some obscure town of the Russian Empire at a considerable distance from St. Petersburg and Moscow. The general was too stunned at first to face the calamity, but his wife rose up bravely to meet it. The command of the despot was received with the dutiful alacrity she might have shown towards a parent whose love and wisdom were beyond doubt, even when they took the form of unexplained severity. This blind unquestioning obedience was, in a great measure, the result of early training and that inherited vassalage from which neither faith, nor experience, nor her clear-sighted perception of the evils of despotism had emancipated Madame's Swetchine's soul, and which proved too plainly how groundless were the fears of Nicholas that, 'in becoming a Catholic, a Russian ceased to be a loyal subject.' In this crisis, however, there were other sources from which she drew her unfaltering courage, as we see from the following note found in her journal :

‘That terrible day, whilst waiting for the arrival

of my visitors, I withdrew to my little chapel, and began to recite the office of the Crucifix. I prayed with the most extraordinary fervour, so much so that, when I was at the door, I turned back, and, looking towards the tabernacle, I said, "My God, I have never before prayed to You like this!" An hour later I was plunged in an abyss of anguish, and, through the confusion and chaos of my misery, my thoughts flew back suddenly to the prayer which had so transported me, and I said to myself, *It was the viaticum of sorrow!*

The following letter, written to an intimate friend at the time, shows us the spirit in which Madame Swetchine accepted the sorrow for which she was thus fortified :

' . . . I can never be unhappy, dearest friend, in the sense which the world gives to that word. . . . If I could but say the same of my husband, I should be even tranquil and consoled ; but his concentrated grief is more than I can bear. The first day he was absent from our home I was seized with terrors such as the greatest tortures can give no idea of. . . . He tried at first to put me off going with him, but he yielded to my inexorable determination to accompany him everywhere and

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always. . . . I have no doubt or anxiety as to the means wherewith Providence will supply for all that is taken from us. We are in all places under that All-seeing Eye ; there is no exile for those who trust God and love Him. So far, nothing has got wind here, I am glad to say. I will never suffer compassion for us to take the form of amazement and indirect blame at such seeming severity. In my misfortune I will never forget that I am a Russian amidst French. God knows that a murmur, a complaint, so much as a word of criticism against my sovereign, has never escaped me. I can hold up my head and say this from the bottom of my heart ; I will never let my speech give the lie to the innermost feelings of my soul. I find in the spirit of my religion a twofold reason for obeying. . . . I mean to neglect no means of obtaining from the kindness of the Emperor the favour of remaining here ; but whatever he decrees, he will find in us faithful subjects, profoundly respectful towards a will which we regard as the will of Heaven. My husband's letter to the Emperor only ventures to implore a delay until the spring. If we do not obtain it, we shall set out immediately. . . . Our books, pictures, furniture, nothing of all this is transportable for people going on a journey of

eight hundred leagues, drifting blindly they know not whither, and who are too old, too afflicted, and too disheartened to dream of setting up a home. The sentence will only allow of our pitching a tent, while waiting to fold it for a winding-sheet.'

Thanks to the indefatigable exertions of their friends at court, the delay was granted, and Madame Swetchine, resigned and courageous, set out alone to St. Petersburg, to plead her husband's cause at the feet of the Emperor. She was absent six months ; but the aim of her journey was accomplished, and after traversing Russia in the most cruel time of the year, she returned with General Swetchine's rehabilitation. It was six o'clock in the morning when she reached Paris, and before driving home she stopped at the church of St. Vincent de Paule in the Rue Montholon to pour out her thanks to God, and receive the ashes,—it chanced to be the first day of Lent,—and then went on to the Rue St. Dominique, where she sank exhausted, a prey to illness which for three months kept her hovering between life and death. Those who were with her during this year of intense anxiety and emotion saw no change in her

manner, no alteration in her angelic sweetness, no faltering in her perfect abandonment to the will of God.

The little chapel in which Madame Swetchine had received that Viaticum of Sorrow was one of the greatest joys and consolations of her life. The Archbishop of Paris granted her the right to keep the Blessed Sacrament there permanently, and she left nothing undone to prove her sense of this magnificent prerogative. The resources of art and wealth were pressed by her ardent devotion into the adornment of her little sanctuary, which those who remember speak of as a shrine let down from heaven. She had devoted her costly jewels to beautifying the sacred vessels, and on her return from this terrible expedition to Russia, her diamond cipher, worn as maid of honour to the Empress, was incrusting in the base of a silver statue of our Lady as a thankoffering. This exquisite sanctuary was a precious resource to her friends as well as to herself. Père Lacordaire delighted in it. He loved to say Mass there, and to make little discourses to the privileged few whom it could contain. Père Gratry, Dom Guéranger, Bishop Dupanloup, Père de Ravignan, the Abbé Bautain, in fact, the most distinguished ecclesiastics of the day, came to cele-

brate the Holy Sacrifice there frequently, and break the bread of the Word to Madame Swetchine and her friends. We can fancy with what loving vigilance she performed her office of sacristan. Once the lamp of the sanctuary went out during the night ; the incident is related in one of her little diaries : ' What I have suffered from the dread of failing towards the majesty of the God of love, my well-beloved Guest, is not to be described. Many a time my heart has been ready to burst with a sudden pang of terror and of love ! And yet . . . ' And she goes on to tell how she had looked at the lamp, and decided that it would last without trimming till morning, when lo ! on entering the chapel soon after dawn, she saw that it had gone out, and her ' heart was seized with a pain that was not free from the sting of self-reproach.'

Madame Swetchine, notwithstanding her unbounded influence over General Swetchine, never had the consolation of seeing him united to her in one faith ; he remained true to the religion in which he was born. Having reached the green old age of ninety-two, one morning, in the year 1851, as Madame Swetchine was going to read the newspaper to him, he fell dead by her side. Her grief was so violent as for a moment to threaten her

reason. Those who knew her best now realised for the first time how large a place her husband had filled in her life ; not that she had seemed wanting in love for him, but, it might be, in something which love may miss when too much energy flows from the central claim.

His death left her now free to devote more time to the contemplation of things eternal, and she henceforth prolonged her absence from Paris through the whole summer, and spent October and November in a convent, absorbed in prayer and spiritual exercises.

But this growing life of solitude did not lessen her interest in the lives of others, or the larger life of the world around. She loved her country passionately, and France only a degree less. When the war broke out between the two nations, it affected her like a domestic grief. The fall of Sebastopol struck her to the heart, though the news was conveyed to her by one whose tenderness acted as salve upon the wound. Mrs. Craven heard the news at the British Embassy, and went straight to her beloved friend in the Rue St. Dominique. Madame Swetchine read the tidings on her visitor's face the moment she beheld her. '*Sebastopol has fallen !*' she exclaimed, and her countenance showed

how deep was her emotion ; but not a word escaped her.

The death of the Emperor Nicholas called forth a striking proof of that magnanimity of soul as well as that curious superstition of loyalty which, in Madame Swetchine's case, threw a glamour over the faults, even the crimes, of the sovereign.

' . . . His death has fallen on me like a thunder-bolt,' she wrote to the Princess Marie of Baden. . . . 'The idea that this grand reign should some day end had never presented itself to my mind. Every day fresh details reach us, most solemn and touching, of this death-bed, where such great examples have been given us. The elevation of the Emperor's soul revealed itself there to the world as it first revealed itself on the day of his accession to the throne.'

When Madame Swetchine uttered this dirge over the dead Czar and his 'grand reign,' it was evident that loyalty had blotted out from her remembrance the cruelty which had drenched Poland with the blood of its noblest sons, and pressed so heavily on the peasants throughout the entire Muscovite Empire that those miserable beings were reduced to the condition of ill-used cattle. Yet this latter truth, at least, had been

constantly kept before her. She had been repeatedly urged to sell her property in Russia, with the serfs attached to it, but had persistently refused to do so, declaring that she would never alienate this living inheritance of her father, but do her best to alleviate their lot, and hand them down in good condition to her sister, the Princess Gargarin. She kept vigilant watch over her peasants from afar, and received an account of what passed on the estates from friends, as well as from a trustworthy agent. The following letter from one of her friends will be read with interest :

‘I contrived to get a confidential visit from one of the runaways from your estate at Nijni. I gave him rendezvous from my balcony under cover of a densely black night, so as not to be seen or overheard by the servants sitting up in the anteroom.’ Speaking of the serfs on another estate, Saratoco, the writer continues : ‘After the first explosion of their joy, they went on to tell me of their griefs : the injustices, the cruel exactions, the forced marriages, &c., they had to suffer from the steward. I asked if they had spoken of these abuses to M. X. “No ; M. X. does not question us, and we dare not open speech with him,” was the reply. A young man, tall, and with a singular expression

of countenance, made his way up to me through the crowd, and, with his eyes full of tears, said, "But who amongst us dare tell the truth? I am the son of Ivan * * *, who passed his life in suffering. He was five-and-twenty years in Siberia, separated from his family, because, wishing to do right, he revealed things which the steward had done. The like would happen to us if we told the truth." The poor fellow was right. I myself worked hard for three years to get Ivan out of Siberia. He came back four years ago; but he is only the shadow of himself.'

Madame Swetchine had reached her seventy-fifth year, and her health, which for the last fifty-five years had been a source of constant and increasing suffering, now showed signs of a final breaking up. She had been afflicted, almost from her youth, by disease of the heart and of the liver. The annual water-cure of Vichy had long kept her alive by a sort of permanent miracle. 'We will make a god of Vichy, as the ancients used to say,' wrote Père Lacordaire to her once; but the god seemed to have come to the end of his power, and his votary, quick to recognise the fact, set her face heavenwards, and prepared for the end that was approaching. Neuralgia, added to all her chronic

maladies, had long made her life a veritable martyrdom. The undaunted strength of her soul and her resolute will enabled her to battle through the day without changing any of her habits, or closing her door for one hour more than usual against the friends who, as Cloppet said, 'were killing her, though they did not know it;' but when the night came, Nature vindicated her rights, and was revenged for the strain put upon her during the day. On lying down, Madame Swetchine generally fell into a sound sleep, from which she was soon roused by violent suffocation; still half asleep, she would fling herself out of bed, often falling against the furniture, and inflicting severe bruises on herself. She would walk up and down to obtain relief, and, while still struggling with feverish agitation and oppressed breathing, would continue some train of thought she had been pursuing in the day, standing now and then at her desk to make a note in pencil. When the day began, all traces of this struggle were gone; she received her visitors with the same cheerful welcome, and made no sign or complaint.

The Comtesse de la Rochejacquelin, daughter of her friend the Duchesse de Duras, placed at her disposal the fine old Château de Fleury for the

summer. The profound stillness of the park, with its waters and its moated towers, soothed the invalid, whose love of solitude grew deeper as she neared the goal. Her friends knew this, and forbore from intruding upon her unless she called to them. Mrs. Craven was amongst the few thus favoured. 'Blessed day !' wrote the sister of Alexandrine, after a visit to Fleury ; 'Madame Swetchine urged me to reserve to myself at all seasons some hours of entire freedom every morning. The quality of time is, she declares, different then from all other times.'

The summer days were bearing her swiftly to the end. Her weakness increased with her sufferings. She noted the progress of the decay with her accustomed clear-sightedness ; but so little did she betray this, that those nearest to her believed her in total ignorance of her danger.

On her return to Paris she grew suddenly worse, and M. de Falloux was sent for in haste. The servants warned him not to say why he had come, as their mistress had no idea of her real state. He could scarcely believe this, it was so unlike her. She received him, however, just as usual, and though evidently in great pain and exhaustion, was full of interest in a variety of subjects, and never

once alluded to her own condition. M. de Falloux went away perplexed, and in a sense disappointed ; but the next morning Madame Swetchine said to him cheerfully when he came in, ' My dear Alfred, I want to have a talk with you about my last wishes.' And she proceeded to tell him where and how she wished to be buried, discussing the details with the utmost coolness, as if it were some ordinary subject of conversation.

' My friend,' said M. de Falloux to Cloppet, as he passed out, ' there is nothing to hide from her. She knows all about it, and a great deal more than we do.'

A severe crisis came on that morning ; but her doors were open at the usual hour, and in spite of her painful breathing, she joined in the conversation going on around her. At night she was always delirious ; but even in this extremity her mind dwelt above its own disarray ; she distinguished clearly reality from delusions, standing aloof from the mental chaos, ' like a soul in dreams, weaving the wondrous tale it marvels at,' and would describe in the morning the strange phantoms that had visited her through the night, processions of the living and the dead, who spoke to her, and whom she answered, saying, ' You are phantoms of my overheated brain ; I will outlive you.'

Père Lacordaire was informed of her state, and arrived in Paris without delay. The meeting was a great joy to Madame Swetchine. Both felt it to be their last on earth, and each strove to make the other feel how precious it was. Père Lacordaire was more son-like than ever in the filial tenderness of his manner, and his presence so revived Madame Swetchine that she at once made a rally, and cheated those around her into the belief that immediate danger was past. He said Mass every morning in her little chapel, where she received Holy Communion as Viaticum, spending three-quarters of an hour of thanksgiving in a prayer of ecstatic devotion, and, in spite of all remonstrance, remaining on her knees the whole time she was in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. On the 1st of September Père Lacordaire said Mass once again for the last time, and took leave of his beloved friend. Madame Swetchine bade him farewell with more than usual tenderness, but without any visible emotion, and without making the slightest effort to detain him.

The next day a terrible crisis came on, and the Curé of St. Thomas d'Aquin was sent for. It was the hour when her afternoon receptions began ; the door of the *salon* stood open, and after the Curé

arrived, several friends came in, and, going upon their knees, joined silently in prayer. Madame Swetchine was sitting up in her little camp-bed ; M. de Falloux was supporting her head with both his hands ; her features were swollen and convulsed, and hoarse inarticulate sounds escaped from the chest, which was heaving with the distress of suffocation. M. le Curé, before administering Extreme Unction, spoke a few touching words of exhortation, upon which Madame Swetchine, triumphing for a moment over the throes of the body, lifted her right hand with an emphatic gesture of assent. All those present preserved a profound silence as the sacred rite proceeded ; but when the priest pronounced the words, 'for all eternity,' and the dying woman, concentrating her energies for a supreme act of faith, gasped out in a loud voice, '*Yes, for all eternity !*' sobs broke forth from every one in the room.

Mrs. Craven was amongst these privileged spectators. Her faithful instinct had hurried her up from the country unwarned, and led her straight to the Rue St. Dominique on reaching Paris. A young Dominican arrived just as Extreme Unction had been administered, and M. le Curé signed to him to approach. 'This is Père Chocarne,' he said

to Madame Swetchine ; ' bless him, and in his person Père Lacordaire, and all the children of St. Dominic.'

She was now suffering so terribly that dissolution seemed imminent, but the doctor came in and made two incisions in the feet, which afforded almost instant relief ; the water which had flooded the lungs and the brain found an outlet, and breathing and the power of speech returned.

They carried her to the open window after awhile, and she sat enjoying the balmy summer evening, the foliage, and the birds. ' Ah,' she said to M. de Falloux, ' if God leaves me here a little longer, I shall enjoy life ; but if He deigns to call me to Himself, what feeling can I have but gratitude to Him ?'

' I have often heard you say that resignation is not enough,' observed her friend.

' No, because it is distinct from the will of God,' she replied ; ' it is the difference between union and unity : in union there are still two ; in unity there is but one, and that is how we should be with regard to the divine will.'

Then, consenting to speak of herself for a moment, she went on to say : ' My great—I may say my only—trial for many a long year has been

not knowing, or not understanding, what the will of God was concerning me. But for that matter, I have full confidence in His mercy; and confidence seems to be the only way now for me to glorify Him.'

During the terrible crisis of the morning they had placed her in a comfortable *fauteuil*, instead of the hard high-backed wooden chair which she always used. When she discovered the fraud, she said to Mrs. Craven, 'Will you believe it, my dear Pauline, I have only now found out the meaning of the word comfortable! What penitential laceration I have inflicted on all the people who have been coming here during these years, making them sit in chairs with wooden arms! I beg their pardon for it. Only it is rather late,' she added, with a smile.

A great change had taken place in her before the next morning. M. de Falloux was so struck by it that when he entered the room he knelt down by the little camp-bed, and, unable to conceal his emotion, gave free vent to it. Madame Swetchine, with a countenance illuminated by faith, bade him lift up his heart to the home where they would soon meet. And here there occurs one of those traits which remind us of our great Christian

mothers of the early Church. When St. Macrina was dying, her brother came to bid her farewell and strengthen her through the last passage ; but at the sight of her sufferings, as she lay on her lowly penitential couch, his courage failed him, and he fell upon his knees by her side, weeping bitterly. Then the dying Saint, rising above the pangs of death, gathered up her ebbing life to rebuke his faltering faith, and spoke such burning words of divine love as inflamed her brother's heart, and consoled him for her departure.

Madame Swetchine had adopted the habit, not uncommon with her countrywomen, of not sleeping in a bedroom, but having a little bed rolled in every night to the *salon*. It now remained there permanently, but its presence was the only sign of illness visible in the large elegantly-furnished room. Not a medicine-bottle, not a glass even, was to be seen on any of the tables. When she wanted a drink to allay her feverish thirst, she looked at Parisse, who sat in a distant corner, her eyes riveted on the face of her benefactress, ready at the least sign to glide to the bedside with her noiseless step. Every morning the invalid had herself dressed with her usual care, and carried in a chair to the chapel, where she heard Mass, and

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received Holy Communion as Viaticum. One morning, believing herself quite alone, she began to pray aloud, breaking out from the very fulness of her heart into a thanksgiving of ardent love. A friend, coming softly in, overheard the ecstatic outpouring, but crept away without betraying her presence. A note from her beloved 'Pauline's' journal gives us a last glimpse of Madame Swetchine in this sanctuary where she had communed with God for so many years: 'I arrived at eight o'clock in the morning. She was in the chapel. I went in and took a *prie-dieu* in front, so that I might see her well when I turned round. This I did when the priest came down to bring her Holy Communion. He first addressed to her a few words of exhortation. I saw the rapt expression of her face as she listened; I saw her ardent look of fervour at the moment the Host was approaching her lips. Then I looked no more. I went to receive Communion myself, bringing away a memory of that dear face that clung to me all day, that will cling to me while I live; for that look was the last I had of her on earth.'

The end was now at hand. As night closed in she grew delirious; but even in its wanderings her mind dwelt in its native element of light. 'Ah,

truth, truth !' she exclaimed, lifting up her voice in tones of strange energy ; 'better a hospital bed with truth, than all the splendours of this world without it !'

Friends had remained to keep this vigil of eternity with her. A priest was in an adjoining room, helping her soul with his prayers, and from time to time coming in to pronounce the absolution over her. At midnight she counted the strokes, and murmured, 'My God, have mercy on me !' Then all was silent until five o'clock, when, hearing the hour strike, she said, 'It will soon be time for Mass ; I must dress myself and be ready.' She made a faint effort to rise, but her head fell back, and her soul passed softly into the presence of God.

It is now more than twenty years since Sophie Soymonoff joined the cloud of witnesses who stand beckoning us to the eternal shore. Her departure was a light put out in many a life ; but in losing the visible presence her friends did not lose her altogether. She remained present amongst them still in the memory of those words of wisdom which had long been their unfailing refreshment in the journey through the desert. That tongue,

though silent, continued to speak, and its utterances have gone on vibrating through countless hearts, repeating their echoes even to us who knew her not, and cheering us by the example of that *donna di virtù* who 'believed and suffered and loved,' and who made her sympathy a fountain of comfort and strength to many.

A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS.

A SOLDIER OF THE CROSS.

ON the 12th of May, in the year 1802, the year when the churches of France, closed by the Revolution, were reopened for the worship of God, a child was born in the village of Recey-sur-Ource. His name was Henri Lacordaire. He was called Henri after Henri Quatre, his mother's political idol. The house in which he first saw the light had been the refuge of a persecuted priest for three months during the Reign of Terror, and the Holy Sacrifice daily offered up here in secret had consecrated it as a kind of church in the eyes of its owner, Dr. Lacordaire, a staunch Christian, whose faith had withstood the storm like a rock in mid-ocean.

Dr. Lacordaire died when Henri was four years old, leaving his wife with four sons to educate and direct in life. Henri, the second, was a beautiful child—mild, ardent, and gentle. His delight was to say Mass in a little chapel which Madame

Lacordaire arranged for him ; his brothers served, and nothing could exceed the gravity with which the baby-priest officiated. He had a passion for preaching too. Colette, his nurse, tells how he used to get on a chair and say to her, 'Sit down, Colette ; prepare for a long sermon to-day !' Sometimes the child worked himself into such a state of excitement that Colette would entreat him to stop, lest he should make himself ill. But Henri would reply, 'No, no ! The world is full of wickedness. I must preach. Never mind the fatigue, Colette.'

Later, when he was eight years old, he would go to the window and hold forth to the astonished passers-by, imitating the gestures and air of a preacher in the pulpit, while he read out one of Bourdaloue's sermons.

At the age of ten, his mother obtained for him a *demi-bourse*—that is to say, admission on half the usual terms—at the Lyceum of Dijon. Here Henri had his first lesson in the school of the Cross. On his death-bed he dictated the history of those early days of suffering.

'From the very first day my companions took me for a butt, and made a victim of me. I could not take a step without being pursued by their vicious ill-nature. For several weeks I was forcibly

deprived of any kind of food except my soup and bread. To escape from this persecution, I used to take refuge in the class-room during recreation, where, hid away under a bench, I lay concealed from masters and pupils. There, alone, without a friend, abandoned by every one, I used to pour forth my tears before God, offering Him my childish sufferings as a sacrifice, and lifting up my heart in a spirit of tender union with the Cross of His Son.'

This novitiate of suffering purified his young heart and prepared him to make his first Communion, which he did at twelve years old, with singular fervour. Speaking of this great event, he says: 'This was my last religious joy; the last sunbeam from my mother's soul on mine. After this the darkness thickened round me; a cold night penetrated me on all sides, and I received no further sign from God in my conscience.'

He says that the *éclat* which rewarded his successful studies awakened his pride, and that, little by little, his faith died out in a kind of torpor. When he returned, some time before entering the School of Law, his mother found that her four sons had ceased to believe, and that not one of them would henceforth kneel beside her at the

altar. Henri recalls with anguish the pang which this separation caused the heart of that mother, whom he speaks of as *cette femme bénie*.

He would have spared it to her if he could have done so without being a hypocrite. 'I love the Gospel,' he says to a friend at this period, 'but faith has not been given to me.'

The success which awaited him in the higher studies of the School of Law was so brilliant that it might have turned an older and wiser head than Henri's; but the nobleness of his nature and the solidity of his intelligence were proof against the peril. 'With one bound he took the first place among his equals,' says M. Lorain; 'we can hear them still, those impromptu discourses, full of lightning flashes, of powerful argument, of unexpected sallies; we can see still that glance, sparkling and fixed, penetrating and calm; we can hear the clear, vibrating voice becoming inebriated of itself as it flowed on in an inexhaustible stream of beauty.'

The same friend takes us into the cell of the brilliant young debater, and shows us the perfect order that reigns there: the books, the papers, all symmetrically arranged on the little table; even the pens and penknife placed with a certain artis-

tic neatness, so that nowhere is the eye vexed by an incorrect angle ; his manuscripts display the same neatness and order : no blots, no words scratched out ; every page looks like the fair copy of a draught.

Père Lacordaire has told us himself how he lost his faith. He has declared time after time from the pulpit that experience had taught him that there is no barrier against temptation in a passionate soul once faith is gone. He tells us also—and those who knew him in those days of wandering confirm the statement—that faith fled from him, not he from faith. ‘At the Lyceum there was nothing to uphold our faith,’ he says.

When he was seventeen he left college, ‘with no religion and with no morality ;’ ‘but,’ he adds, ‘I was frank, truthful, endowed with a fine sense of honour, loving literature and all that was beautiful, and having no other beacon before me but the ideal of human glory.’

Loving all that was beautiful. Apart from his mother’s prayers, here lay the promise of the wanderer’s return. His was a love of the beautiful which could never be satisfied till it rested in the infinite, eternal beauty of God.

As soon as Henri had finished his course of

law, Madame Lacordaire, in spite of her limited means, determined on sending him to Paris.

He was not dazzled by the great Babylon. He kept aloof from its fascinations and its perils, and led in the great city the same quiet, studious life that he had led at Dijon. He felt keenly the isolation and loneliness of his new position ; for he had no friends, and, as yet, hardly any acquaintances. His soul was a prey to the anguish of unbelief ; he longed for the joys of friendship, but he felt that without the bond of a common faith there can be no true friendship ; no one could help him but the God of his mother, and he had ceased to believe in Him.

He had hired a little room at the top of a house in the Rue Mont Thabor, and there, alone with his books and his imagination, he pursued his studies and indulged in dreams, when his work was done at M. Guillemin's, the barrister who had taken him into his office. The dreams were chiefly of fame for himself and liberty for his country. ' I was the child of my generation,' he says, ' by my love of liberty, as well as by my ignorance of God and His Gospel.'

Those were days when France was passing through a crisis, when all the forces of the nation,

pent up since the Revolution, were struggling into life, and gasping for the breath of liberty. Many eyes were turned towards the young Republic of America, where this inebriating air of freedom was inhaled with all its regenerating power. Henri Lacordaire's thoughts turned often longingly to this Eldorado, while his pen toiled diligently at his dry lawyer's work. Thirty years later he cries out, 'Which of us has not in those young days fancied himself wandering free through the solitudes of the New World, with no roof but the blue sky, no drink but the water of unknown streams, no food but the spontaneous fruit of the earth or the game that his gun brought down, with no law but his own will?'

But life was too short to be wasted in dreamy aspirations. The young barrister was not idle. His first essays at the bar met with signal success. Great men were struck by the splendour of his gifts; Berryer foretold his future preëminence, and the First President, M. Séguier, after assisting at one of his first oratorical efforts, exclaimed: 'Messieurs, it is not Patru we have been hearing; it is Bossuet!'

But the incense of human praise, far from intoxicating Henri, only deepened the sadness which

was now his inseparable companion. 'If you knew how sad I am growing!' he says to a friend; 'but I love melancholy, and I live much in her company. People talk to me of glory, of public office, and I have my own fancies about such things; but, to tell the truth, fame inspires me with nothing but pity, and I can't conceive people taking so much trouble to run after such a silly jade.'

This weariness of life, and what men prize most in it, was a safe augury for the sceptical enthusiast's ultimate choice. His was not a soul to be satisfied with even the best and noblest that this world can give. By degrees the clouds began to part, and the light gradually broke in. His mind was still unbelieving, but his soul was essentially religious.

'Will you believe it?' he writes to a friend in 1824; 'I feel myself becoming a Christian every day. It is the strangest thing, the progressive change that is going on in my opinions. I have come to believe, and yet I have never been more of a philosopher. A little philosophy draws one away from religion; a great deal of philosophy brings one back to it. This is a great truth!'

His friends knew not what to make of him.

They saw him seldom, and then he was grave and absent. Sometimes they came upon him in a church, and would watch him concealed in some dark corner, on his knees, motionless, and absorbed in meditation.

One day a friend sought him out in his garret in the Rue Mont Thabor. He found him alone, seated before his desk, his head buried in his hands; not a book near him, not a scrap of paper on the table.

‘Henri, you are unhappy,’ said the intruder kindly; ‘I don’t ask you for your confidence; but you know the extent of my affection for you; my only desire is to anticipate your wishes.’

Henri thanked him, but replied that for the moment he could say nothing; he was meditating a plan, but it had not yet taken a settled form in his mind. ‘When it has,’ he added, ‘you shall be among the first to hear it.’

Very soon after this visit it was Henri’s turn to seek out his friend.

‘Well,’ he exclaimed joyfully, ‘my plan is now settled. I am going to enter the Seminary.’

He was converted. With a nature like his, conversion meant the consecration of his whole being to the service of God, whom for nine years

he had forsaken. To the last hour of his life the remembrance of that 'sublime moment' when his dead faith came to life remained to him a subject of joy and grateful emotion.

'I could not possibly say on what day or at what hour, or how my faith, which for nine years had been dead, reappeared in the midst of my heart like a torch which had never been extinguished.'

His vocation came simultaneously with his conversion. Before entering upon it, however, he wrote to his mother, asking her blessing and consent. He knew the sacrifice would cost her many a pang, but he believed that the joy of seeing him a Christian would console her for giving him up. She wrote him six letters, in which happiness and grief struggle for the mastery through every line ; but seeing he was not to be shaken, she gave her consent.

On the 12th of May, his twenty-second birthday, in the year 1824, Henri Lacordaire entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice. It seemed to him that he had entered the garden of Paradise. Everything in his new life was a source of delight. The silence that reigned through the place, except when the bell called to prayer or study or recrea-

tion, the atmosphere of joy and peace and piety, the contagious happiness of the young brotherhood, all filled him with thankfulness too deep for words. He threw himself heart and soul into his vocation, and soon distinguished himself here, as he had done elsewhere, by the nobility of his character and his brilliant intellectual gifts, whilst his fervour was a subject of edification to all, and his mercurial gaiety made him a universal favourite.

But withal his inward peace and joy in the lofty vocation which he had entered on, the seminarian was still unsatisfied ; his generous soul aspired to fuller sacrifice, to more complete self-renunciation than that which the secular priesthood demanded. 'I am content,' he writes to a friend, soon after his entrance to St. Sulpice ; but he ends the letter with these portentous words : 'I now indulge in dreams of poverty instead of dreams of fortune, as I used to do.'

Dreams of poverty ! The highest ideal of the true lover of the Cross was what his soul sighed for, and he would never rest till he had embraced it. But the day was yet a long way off before this hill-top was to be reached.

Meantime, this ardent spirit of zeal manifested itself now and then in a way that perplexed his

grave and venerable guides. He would stagger the professor in the midst of a lecture by putting some question which showed how large a share he exacted for reason in every conclusion, sometimes breaking in with an illustration which compelled the lecturer to enter on a discussion that did not always terminate triumphantly for his own thesis.

It is the habit in the Seminary for the students to preach by turn in the refectory, and the future orator of Notre Dame made his *début* here.

‘I preached,’ he says—relating the incident to a friend—‘that is to say, I lifted up my voice amidst the clatter of plates and knives and forks. I suppose there can’t be conceived a more trying position for an orator than to have to address men while they are eating. Cicero would never have pronounced the Catiline speeches at a dinner of senators, unless he made them drop their knives and forks at the first sentence. What would it have been if he had had to discourse to them on the Mystery of the Incarnation? Yet this is what I had to do; and I confess that the air of complete indifference depicted on all the faces, the sight of these men, who seemed not paying the least heed to me, and whose attention was apparently concentrated on their plates, gave me the greatest

desire to fling my biretta at their heads. I came down from the pulpit with the conviction that my sermon had been a horribly bad one. I swallowed my dinner quickly, and went out to the garden, where, to my surprise, I soon found that my discourse had made quite an effect, and that they had all been struck by it. I will confine myself to this one remark, which contains already too much self-love, and I will refrain from telling you of the flattering previsions, opinions, and advice that followed.'

Two years and a half flowed on in this earnest and happy life at St. Sulpice, and the seminarist was not yet called to Holy Orders. He was astonished, but not discouraged, when he found that this delay was owing to a certain mistrust on the part of his superiors. They were afraid of his impassioned nature. The union of so tenderly religious a soul with such dazzling mental gifts and a nature so daringly independent perplexed them, and they hesitated before admitting to the priesthood the possessor of such brilliant but perilous endowments. The result of this hesitation was to turn the student's thoughts more seriously towards the religious life. The Jesuits were the only order then in France, and he made up his mind

to enter it. Monseigneur de Quélen, however, so strongly opposed the project that the young seminarist relinquished it. This docility and his perseverance, in spite of all obstacles and doubts, disarmed the latent fears of St. Sulpice, and the council decided at once on admitting him to orders.

He was received as sub-deacon, and on the 22nd of September he was ordained a priest by Monseigneur de Quélen, in his own private chapel.

‘What I wished to do is done,’ he writes, three days later ; ‘I am a priest. *Sacerdos in æternum, secundum ordinem Melchisedech.*’

Very soon after this, the Abbé Boyer, a holy and learned priest to whom the Abbé Lacordaire confessed in the absence of M. Garnier, his ordinary confessor, said to him one day: ‘My dear friend, sit down there, I want to talk to you. I am going to make you a Cardinal !’

The Abbé Lacordaire laughed, and asked what he meant.

‘It is no laughing matter,’ replied M. Boyer ; and he went on to tell him that Monseigneur Frayssinous had consulted him as to a fitting person to fill the place of Auditor of the Rota at the Court of Rome, just now vacant through the

election of Monseigneur d'Icoard to the Archbishopric of Auch. 'You are the very person he wants,' continued M. Boyer. 'Providence has opened the way for you by this opportunity to a magnificent career, and no one is better fitted for it than you are by your talent, your knowledge of law, your knowledge of the world, and your gift of eloquence.'

It was an offer well calculated to call forth whatever leaven of earthly ambition might still lurk in the heart of the young priest; but that leaven seemed to have been utterly cast out. He replied, without a moment's hesitation: 'In becoming a priest, I had but one object in view: to serve the Church by preaching. If I had desired honours, I should have remained in the world. Think no more of me for this. I will be nothing but a simple priest; perhaps a religious, some day.'

Nor was he to be moved from this resolve by any arguments.

The next offer that came to him was that of chaplain to a convent of Visitandine nuns. This he accepted. Here, instead of dealing with high matters and taking his share in the government of Christendom from the palace of the Vatican, the young priest devoted his noble mind to con-

fessing simple religious and teaching the Catechism to little girls. He threw all his energies into these lowly studies, setting lessons to the children, and correcting their copybooks himself with the utmost care. Lofty questions were treated in these familiar instructions; the attributes of God, taken from the *Summa* of St. Thomas, formed the subject of many of them, and the copybooks of some of the pupils are still to be seen, marked 'Good,' 'Very good,' 'Excellent,' and signed 'H. L.'

So great was the dignity and discretion which the Abbé Lacordaire displayed in his intercourse with the community and their pupils, that no one remembers his ever having raised his eyes while speaking to them.

His mother came to share his solitude at the Convent of the Visitation, and she was amazed to find him so completely isolated from the outer world. 'Thou hast, then, no friend, my son?' was her sad exclamation on discovering how completely alone he was.

But this solitude, far from weighing on the young priest, was a source of happiness and thankfulness. It gave him leisure for work, and it was a breathing-space before the battle for which he was preparing himself. When his friends urged

him to come forth, and be up and doing, to let his talent shine out before the world, he replied, 'God's hour has not yet sounded. I must wait till He calls me.'

'The craze to be somebody is the bane of our time,' he writes to a friend. 'If a great man is born to us, he will come out of some poor hut where the son of a coalheaver lives on a fortune of twenty crowns a year. The only true glory, that of God, was born in solitude.'

He had dreams still of carrying this glory to the heathen, of going as a missionary across the ocean. But, as he said, God's hour had not yet come, and he was content to wait.

At the end of 1828 he was named coadjutor-chaplain to the Collège Henri IV. He continued his silent life of study and meditation here, as at the Visitation. 'What do I do here?' he answers to a friend. 'I dream, I think, I read, I pray, I laugh two or three times a week, I weep once or twice. I give battle now and then to the University, the most intolerable daughter of the King whom I know of; . . . add to this a few extempore instructions to the pupils of the 3rd and 4th class. Such is my life.'

A year later he made the acquaintance of M. de

Lamennais, an incident that was to be a source of the greatest suffering and the greatest peril that awaited Lacordaire in his future apostleship.

He set out one day, alone, to visit the great master in his retreat, and, arriving at Dinan, struck into the forest, whose gloomy paths led him, after many windings, to La Chesnaie—‘a dark and lonely house,’ he describes it, ‘whose mysterious celebrity was disturbed by no breath of sound.’

He was conquered, but not won, by the genius of M. de Lamennais, whose philosophy had never taken full possession of his mind ; but he had now gone too far to draw back, and ‘after eight years’ hesitation,’ he tells us, ‘I surrendered myself, without enthusiasm, but of my free will, to the school which had failed hitherto to win over my sympathies or my convictions.’

This surrender brought no change, however, in his missionary aspirations. It seemed destined rather to open to them an immediate opportunity. The Bishop of New York was staying at La Chesnaie, and offered the Abbé Lacordaire the place of Vicar-General in his diocese. The latter at once accepted it. It was an acceptance that involved no slight sacrifice to one who loved his country and his friends so passionately ; but the apostolic

soul of Lacordaire was drawn to the United States by the magnet of social sympathies as well as by his zeal for the mission. He had worked his way back to the Faith through social creeds, and he longed to see with his own eyes the triumphant realisation of the problem which so many Catholic minds in Europe were trying to solve—that of the Church and the State reigning peaceably side by side, each free and independent of the other. It was worth crossing the Atlantic to study the social organisation where the Church, which counted in 1808 two dioceses and eighty churches, showed now forty-five dioceses and three thousand churches, and owed this development to the unaided force of liberty.

The Abbé Lacordaire, having obtained the consent of his mother and the Archbishop, set out for Bordeaux to take leave of his family and his friends. While there he received a letter from La Chesnaie, informing him that a newspaper, entitled *L'Avenir*, was about to be started by the Catholic party, and asking him in their name to lend his coöperation to a work at once Catholic and national, and by which they hoped to bring about the freedom of religion and the reconciliation of parties. The Abbé de Lamennais accepted the events which

had just taken place—that is to say, the republic new-born of the Revolution of 1830—while he abandoned the absolutist doctrines which he had hitherto so fiercely upheld.

The Abbé Lacordaire felt at once that it was imperative on him to renounce his intention of going to America, and to remain at home and cast in his lot with those who were about to engage in the struggle of religious independence.

The *Avenir* was founded on the 15th of October 1830. M. de Montalembert, who was in Ireland at the time, hurried back to enrol himself under the banner of the new enterprise. He now met the Abbé Lacordaire for the first time, and this first meeting was the beginning of a friendship that endured till death.

The story of the *Avenir* is known to us all; how the brilliant journal lived but for a little span, flashing across the horizon like a meteor, and then going out in darkness. The passionate love of liberty which inspired its chief collaborators was one of those two-edged swords which become perilous even in the hands of the most prudent warriors. In times like the present, it was almost impossible to wield such a weapon without endangering the principles it was meant to defend. The

storm gathered quickly over the heads of the devoted band, and spread dismay and insecurity amongst their followers. The Abbé Lacordaire proposed that they, the editors, should carry their cause before the Holy See, and have it judged by the infallible tribunal of Peter. Accordingly, M. de Lammenais, M. de Montalembert, and himself set out for Rome, and arrived there at the end of December 1831.

The Pope desired, before receiving them, that they should draw up a summary of their views and aims as embodied in the suspected journal. The Abbé Lacordaire did this, and then Gregory XVI. admitted them all to an audience, where he showed them great kindness, and dismissed them without having once alluded to the *Avenir*.

His Holiness, on reading the sort of religious and political *credo* which the Abbé Lacordaire had drawn up, sent word to the three pilgrims that they might now return to France. M. de Lammenais received the message with an outburst of rebellious pride, and refused to leave Rome.

The Abbé Lacordaire accepted it in a spirit of sonlike submission. It was not without a struggle that he gave up his cherished scheme, with its ardent aspirations and its glorious visions ; but the

struggle was short-lived, and the surrender complete.

‘I know not the day nor the hour,’ he says, relating this eventful crisis of his life long afterwards; ‘but I saw what I had not seen before, and I left Rome free and victorious. I learned from my own experience that the Church is the liberatrix of the human mind.’

The revolt of his chief was a cruel blow to him, and he left nothing untried to save the ‘unfortunate great man,’ as he styled M. de Lamennais. But when wounded pride becomes master of a soul, no earthly power can save it; not the tenderest human love; only God can work this miracle. M. de Lamennais’ fall was too great, perhaps, for him to rise again. As Madame Swetchine said, ‘Only a priest or an angel could fall so low.’ The Abbé Lacordaire clung to the rebel while there remained the faintest hope of winning him back, and when, at last, he was compelled to abandon him, it was with the bitterness of death in his heart. He went down once more to La Chesnaie, where M. de Lamennais had withdrawn on his return from Rome. Many other young disciples hastened to gather round their unhappy master, in the same vain hope of saving him.

‘The house had resumed its old aspect,’ says the Abbé Lacordaire ; ‘but if the woods retained the same stillness and the same storms, if the sky of Armorica was unchanged, not so was the heart of the master. The wound was living, and the sword was turned in it each day by the very hand which ought to have drawn it out and poured the balm of heaven into it. Terrible clouds passed and repassed on that brow, henceforth disinherited of peace. Broken, threatening words escaped from those lips whence had flowed the unction of the Gospel. It seemed to me at times that I beheld Saul ; but none of us had David’s harp to calm these sudden irruptions of the evil spirit, and the terror of fatal previsions increased day by day in my heavily-laden spirit. The dreadful spectacle became at length more than I could bear, and I wrote to M. de Lamennais.’

The letter is too characteristic of both to be omitted, even in so brief a sketch of Lacordaire’s life as the present :

‘La Chesnaie, Dec. 4, 1832.

‘I shall leave La Chesnaie this evening. I leave it from a sense of honour, being persuaded that henceforth my life would be useless to you on account of the difference of our views concerning

the Church and society, a difference which has increased in spite of my sincere attempt to follow the development of your opinions. . . . It may be that your opinions are more just, more profound, but as I cannot eradicate from my being the ideas which separate us, it is only right that I should put an end to a community of life where all the advantage is on my side, and all the burden on yours. Conscience compels me to this as well as honour, for I must do something for God with my life, and since I cannot go with you, what should I do here but fatigue and discourage you, and place obstacles in your way, and annihilate myself?

‘You will know in heaven—never before—what I have suffered during this year by the mere dread of giving you pain. . . . I leave you to-day tranquil as regards the Church, higher in public opinion than you have ever been, so high above your enemies that they no longer exist, I may say. I could not choose a better moment for inflicting on you a sorrow which, believe me, will spare you much greater ones. . . .’

The Abbé Lacordaire took his departure from La Chesnaie alone, on foot, while M. de Lamennais was taking his usual walk after dinner. At a

turn of the road, the traveller stood and looked back on the home of the man with whose name the world was ringing. He saw him through the trees, surrounded by the young disciples who still clung to him, disbelieving in the coming ruin. He gazed at the group with a swelling heart, and then went forth, he knew not whither, except that he was going to seek the will of God.

In the spring of 1832 the cholera broke out in Paris. The Revolution had extinguished what remained of faith in the population, and it was with great difficulty that the Abbé Lacordaire obtained permission to devote himself to the sufferers in one of the impromptu hospitals established in a public building. He passed whole days there, disguised as a layman, and wandering timidly amidst the plague-stricken, in hopes of finding a soul whom he might help and comfort. 'Here and there,' he says, 'a few make their confession; many are dying without voice and without ears. I place my hand on their head, and, confiding in the divine mercy, I pronounce the words of absolution. I seldom come away without feeling some consolation for having gone. Yesterday a woman was carried in; her husband, a soldier, was standing by the bed; I drew near, and he asked me in a whisper if by

chance there was a curé in the place. I replied, "*I am one.*" It is a great happiness to arrive just in time to save a soul, and give joy to a man.'

From these divine joys, which only the heart of the true priest knows, the Abbé Lacordaire passed once more into the solitude of that Convent of the Visitation where he had already spent two years in the humble position of chaplain. It was during this second sojourn there that he became acquainted with Madame Swetchine. Madame Swetchine, to the tenderness of a mother united the wisdom of a sage and the piety of an angel, and the Abbé Lacordaire says that the balance of her mind was so perfect, and her judgment so free from prejudice, that he was a long time before he found where her personal sympathies lay. 'Never,' he says, 'did I feel farther away from this world than when I was in her company.'

In the year 1834 he may be said to have found his real mission. The head of the Collège Stanislas wished him to give some lectures, religious conferences they were called, to the students of the college. The Abbé Lacordaire, feeling that his vocation lay in this direction, accepted the invitation, and on the 19th of January he made his first discourse in the college chapel. The success was immense. The

pupils were soon obliged to leave their seats free to the crowd, distinguished men of all classes, believers and unbelievers, who flocked to the chapel. The enthusiasm of the audience was such that Berryer and Chateaubriand, finding the doors closed one day when they arrived, sent for a ladder, and got in through the window.

The noise of this rising fame reached the ears of the Archbishop of Paris, and one day when the Abbé Lacordaire went to call on him he suddenly said : ‘ It is my intention to offer you the pulpit of Notre Dame : would you accept it ? ’ Frederic Ozanam had twice entreated Mgr. de Quélen to intrust the pulpit of the cathedral to his friend, but the Archbishop had hesitated up to this point fearing the ardent and, as some considered, too daring eloquence of the young priest. The Abbé Lacordaire was too startled by the proposal to be able at once to answer it. He asked for twenty-four hours to think over the matter. They were granted, and ‘ after praying to God and consulting Madame Swetchine,’ as he tells us, he accepted the perilous invitation.

The excitement caused by this announcement was great. Many condemned the Archbishop for what they deemed an act of dangerous rashness.

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Even Lacordaire's friends trembled for him as the day of trial drew near. When it came, it found an audience gathered in the grand cathedral such as had never before been witnessed within those venerable walls. 'I ascended the pulpit,' says the preacher, 'not without emotion, but steadily, and I began my discourse with my eyes fixed on the Archbishop, who was to me, next to God, but before the public, the chief personage present. He listened with his head bent in an attitude of complete impassibility, like a man who was not merely a spectator and judge, but who was himself running personal risks in the solemn venture. When I had gained footing with my audience, when my chest had expanded under the necessity of taking in that vast multitude, and that inspiration carried me past the calm of a *début*, there broke from me one of those cries whose accent, when it is sincere and deep, never fails to move those who hear it. The Archbishop trembled ; a pallor, which was visible even to me at that distance, overspread his face ; he raised his head and looked at me with a glance of astonishment. I felt that the day was won with him, as well as with my audience.'

The day was indeed won, and so complete was the victory that the Archbishop was with difficulty

dissuaded from naming the orator canon of the cathedral there and then, instead of waiting till the end of the station. All that Paris boasted of intellectual superiority, in every rank and of every age, now crowded to hear him whom Mgr. de Quélen designated as 'the new Prophet.' The conference began at one o'clock, and at five, before the doors were opened, this rare audience stood waiting for admittance to Notre Dame, and patiently waited on through those long hours. A great light had risen in the darkness, and men welcomed it with an enthusiasm unrivalled since the Ages of Faith. For two years the orator continued to occupy the pulpit of Notre Dame, and for two years he held the minds of his audience spellbound. Then he withdrew once more into solitude and silence.

This time it was to Rome that he turned his steps. Here he plunged deeper than ever into meditation and study, the first-fruits of which appeared in that loyal and brilliant defence of the Papacy against his old master, M. de Lamennais, called *Lettre sur le Saint Siège*. Honours were pressed upon him at the Vatican, but, true to his first resolve, he steadily declined them; his answer was still, 'I will be a priest, and nothing more, unless it be a religious.'

As he was on the eve of returning to France, to preach the Lenten Station at Metz, the cholera broke out in Rome, and again setting aside all other duties, the Abbé Lacordaire devoted himself to the care of the plague-stricken. 'My meagre knowledge of the language hinders me from being as useful as I might,' he says; 'but it is a comfort to feel that I am at least exposed to the same risks as the others.'

Towards the end of September (1837) the pestilence abated, and again he prepared to return home. But, in truth, his home was yet to be found. He had seen it in his dreams during these eighteen prayerful months in the Eternal City, and it was now the longing of his soul to realise those dreams. His thirst for souls, for the Cross, for the service of God, had discovered a source at which to quench itself: this was the resurrection of the monastic orders in France.

'In walking through the streets of Rome and praying in the basilicas, I became convinced,' he said, 'that the greatest service which could be rendered to Christendom in the days in which we live would be to do something for the restoration of religious orders.' His thoughts turned towards St. Dominic, whose large-hearted spirit and all-

embracing zeal attracted him like a kindred soul. But the few friends to whom he opened his mind on the subject looked coldly on the scheme. Even Madame Swetchine had nothing but passive sympathy to offer. One circumstance alone encouraged him : this was the success of the Abbé Guéranger in his efforts for the restoration of the Benedictine Order in France.

The Abbé Lacordaire paid a visit to his venerable friend at Solesmes in the summer of the following year, and spent there two months, ruminating his project and studying the rule and life of St. Dominic. While thus occupied, he received a visit one day from a priest quite unknown to him, who of his own accord suggested that he should do for the Dominican Order what Dom Guéranger had done for the Benedictines. The Abbé Lacordaire was delighted, and looked on this coincidence as of good omen. He resolved to return to Rome at the end of another year, having spent the interval in preparing himself for the great work towards which he now felt that a divine force, stronger than earthly circumstances, was impelling him irresistibly.

Before leaving Paris, however, he wished to take leave of Monseigneur de Quélen, and consult

with him concerning his great design. He relates this interview himself :

‘ Monseigneur de Quélen knew nothing of my project, and supposed that I had come back to Paris in order to resume my conferences at Notre Dame. . . . After hearing what I had to say, he said coldly, “Those things are in the hands of God, but His will has not yet manifested itself.” He was going at this very moment to give me a manifestation of it, and thereby afford me the first encouragement I had yet received. As I rose to take leave, I said that if we restored the order of Preaching Friars in France, St. Hyacinth would no doubt be favourable to us. St. Hyacinth was one of his Christian names, and one of the great Saints of the Dominican Order.

“No doubt,” he replied ; “perhaps it is you who will fulfil my dream.”

“What dream, my lord ?” I inquired.

“Do you not know about my dream ? Sit down, and I will relate it to you.” And in the most charming way, he made me sit down, and told me the following story :

“I had just been named Coadjutor to Paris. In the month of August 1820 Cardinal de Périgord gave a retreat in his own palace to the parish

priests of Paris, and on this occasion I came and occupied an apartment there. On the night of the 3rd to the 4th of August, vigil of St. Dominic's Feast, as the clock of Notre Dame struck two, as it seemed to me, I felt myself transported into the gardens of the palace, close to the Seine and opposite the Hôtel-Dieu. I was seated in an armchair. Presently I saw a vast multitude gathered on the banks of the river and looking up at the sky. The sky was without a cloud, but the sun seemed to be covered with a black veil, from which its beams escaped like blood ; it was flying across the heavens, and seemed precipitating itself towards the extremity of the horizon. It soon disappeared, and all the people fled away, crying out, 'Woe on us!' Left alone, I beheld the waters of the Seine rising rapidly, till their narrow bed was swollen to overflowing. Sea-monsters came with the flood of waters, and stopped before Notre Dame and the archiepiscopal palace, making great efforts to spring out on the quay. Then I beheld a second vision. I was transported to a convent of nuns clothed in black, where I remained a long time. This exile ended, and I found myself once more in the place where my dream had commenced. But the palace had disappeared ; on its site I beheld a flowery

lawn. The waters of the Seine had subsided ; the sun shone with its accustomed brightness ; the air was fresh, and embalmed with the scents of spring, summer, and autumn all combined : it was a something in all Nature which I had never felt before. While I was inhaling this sweetness with a sort of intoxication, I beheld at my right hand ten men dressed in white ; these ten men plunged their hands into the Seine and drew forth the sea-monsters that I had beheld there, and laid them down on the sward transformed into lambs. You see," continued Monseigneur de Quélen, "all this dream of 1820 has been literally fulfilled. The monarchy, represented by the sun veiled in black, fell precipitately amidst the popular rejoicings at the taking of Algiers ; the populace attacked Notre Dame and my palace. The palace was destroyed, and a lawn full of flowers covers the site where it stood. I resided for a long time, and I reside still, in this convent of nuns dressed in black. What remains yet of my dream to be fulfilled ? Only to see in Paris those men clad in white, and occupied in converting the people. Who knows ? Perhaps you are destined to bring them to me !"

The Abbé Lacordaire set out towards Rome on the 31st of July, and arrived there on the Feast

of the Assumption. He met with the warmest sympathy everywhere. The Dominicans of St. Sabina welcomed him with open arms; the Vatican received his petition with every mark of favour. Before a month was out he had obtained full permission to restore the order of the Dominicans in France. His novices were to make their novitiate in Rome, and return with him as Provincial, armed with full authority for such modifications in the rule as the times rendered necessary.

Providence sent him for fellow-toilers in his mission five elect souls, who all received the white habit of their saintly founder, with the Abbé Lacordaire, from the hands of the Father-General, in the church of La Minerva in Rome, on the 9th of April 1839. On the following day they were to go to the monastery of La Quercia, a place of pilgrimage not far from Rome, and whose community, numbering in all thirty-five monks, was held in high repute for sanctity. The memory of the French novices is held in benediction at La Quercia to this day. The venerable old Padre Palmegiani, who was their novice-master, and who died a saintly death in the year 1863, spoke, to the last, of the consolation these young strangers had given him while under his direction. He said of

the Père Lacordaire that he had been 'a true model of religious perfection.' But amidst the many virtues which distinguished him, the one that outshone them all was humility. He loved to make himself the servant of every one, sweeping out the rooms, drawing water, cleaning the lamps, seizing every opportunity of doing the menial work of the house. He never spoke of himself. One day at recreation, when a novice asked him if the crowd at Notre Dame had been as great as people said, he pretended not to hear, but turned to the person next him and spoke of something else.

The Holy Father offered to dispense him from six months of the usual novitiate, but he refused the favour. Gentle to others, he had a horror of the word 'dispensation' for himself. During this blessed year of solitude and penance he wrote the Life of St. Dominic, of which Chateaubriand said that 'it contained some of the finest pages of modern French literature;' 'A book,' says Madame Swetchine, 'which is itself a miracle, for it is destined to work miracles.'

On the 12th of April 1840 Père Lacordaire pronounced his vows. On the following day he and his young companions said adieu to La Quercia, and took up their abode in the convent of

St. Sabina, there to wait until God called them to a home in their native land.

In December Père Lacordaire set out for France, which he boldly traversed in the monastic habit that for fifty years had not been seen in that Catholic land. He had been strongly urged to, at least, throw a cloak over it, so as not to provoke public insult, perhaps outrage; but he despised this precaution, and appeared everywhere in the white habit and cowl of his order. The new Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Affre, wished him to resume his conferences at Notre Dame, and gave him permission to wear his habit in the pulpit. The excitement this caused in Paris was tremendous. Many expected it would put the match to the powder, and cause a signal explosion of anti-religious feeling in the city. They were mistaken. The orator was received with greater enthusiasm than ever, and blessed God for this triumph of the Religious Orders in his person. Everywhere the new son of St. Dominic was the object of respect, sympathy, and admiration.

He returned to Rome after the Lenten Station, taking with him five more novices, and here fresh proofs of divine mercy and human favour awaited him. The Holy Father, hearing that he had fallen

ill of smallpox, sent a special messenger to convey to him the apostolic benediction, with the personal sympathy of his Holiness. Yet it was at this moment, when Heaven and earth smiled upon his enterprise, that the thunderbolt was about to fall on it.

One evening, as he was returning with his brethren from performing the Stations in one of the churches, a letter was handed him from the Secretary of State. It contained an order for the dispersion of the French Dominicans; one half were to return to La Quercia, the other half to go to Bosco, in Piedmont. Humanly speaking, it was a death-blow to the work which had cost so dear. The separation of the members from their head, and the public stigma of disfavour which it laid upon them all, was virtually a dissolution of the community. Père Lacordaire, whose trust was higher than this world, replied that the order should be immediately obeyed. Three days later the little band of monks had gone forth to their appointed exiles, and Père Lacordaire remained alone. He bowed his head uncomplainingly, and, plunging himself deeper than ever into prayer and study, he waited for the next manifestation of the Divine Will.

Meantime he obtained permission to return to France in order to preach at Bordeaux through the winter. He preached there without interruption during four months, and with a success that had no precedent in the annals of oratory, sacred or profane. Tribunes were raised in the vast cathedral, which still was not vast enough to hold the crowd that thronged to hear him. The town was wrought up to a frenzy of enthusiasm, and *le discours du Père* was the subject of general conversation in all classes ; nothing else was talked of in the cafés, the clubs, and the *salons* of Bordeaux.

The hotels were full to overflowing ; people of all conditions came from the neighbouring country and towns to take up their abode in Bordeaux while the great preacher remained. At one of the principal hotels it happened, early during the Lenten Station, that, on a Friday, the guests refused to eat meat, and of one accord requested that fish might be provided for them on the fast-days in future. This example was followed in many other hotels. Cafés and restaurants at last closed during the hour of the sermon, and the proprietors went off to hear the great preacher, with the rest of the world. The harvest of conversions was rich.

From Bordeaux Père Lacordaire went to

Nancy, and here the same blessed results awaited him. Here, also, he received that manifestation of the Divine Will which he had waited for so patiently. Amongst his hearers was a young man of good fortune named M. de St. Beaussant. His soul was fired by the burning words of the son of St. Dominic, and he placed himself at his disposal for the foundation of a community of Dominicans there and then. He bought a house, furnished it, and on the Feast of Pentecost, Père Lacordaire took possession of it. But this peaceful event was not to pass off without noise and tribulation. The Government took offence, and the popularity of the intruder did not save him from the opposition and prolonged petty persecution of the authorities. In spite of this, however, though he met with obstacles and a hostile spirit from many, the cause was won, and this humble beginning was steadily followed by noble and glorious progress in the same direction. Missions rose, the pastoral staff of St. Dominic was planted on French soil, and the land which had been barren as a wilderness for over fifty years now saw the precious flowers of monastic life flourishing on all sides. True, the battle had still to be carried on against the infidel spirit of the times, against the

crawling sycophancy of those in subordinate power, against the half-hearted support of those in high places. Père Lacordaire was a mark for cruel and cowardly attacks, for open persecution and hostility ; but he never quailed before the storm, he never sacrificed one iota of the independence which it behoved him to maintain in the face of peril or of tyranny. He defended his flag with the valour of a crusader and the meekness of a true soldier of the Cross.

It is time that we spoke of him more especially in the latter character, and raised the veil which his brilliant reputation as an orator has drawn too closely round the virtues of the monk. His beloved son and biographer, Père Chocarne, has revealed to us in that wonderful 14th chapter of the Life, from which this sketch is taken, the marvels of heroic penance which edified and amazed his brethren, and which show us the orator of Notre Dame greater far in the obscurity of the cloister than in the pulpit, where his voice awoke the echoes of Christendom.

Love of the Cross of Jesus Christ crucified was the master-passion of his soul, the keynote of his spiritual life. He loved the Cross with all his soul and mind and will, with the passionate tenderness

of his pure and generous heart. All his mystical theology may be summed up in these words, says Père Chocarne : 'Suffering for justice' sake, in a spirit of expiation ; for love, in order to prove our love.' His thanksgiving after Mass was generally followed by some generous act of penance. He would hasten from the altar to the cell of one of his brethren, and, kneeling down, would kiss his feet, and beg him for the love of God to punish him a little for his sins. Then, uncovering his shoulders, he would hand the discipline to his brother, and insist on his giving him a severe scourging. Sometimes he would beg the monk to sit down again to his work, when, prostrating himself on the ground, he would place his neck under the feet of the other, and remain a quarter of an hour in prayer, rejoicing in his humiliation, while his sensitive flesh still throbbed from the discipline.

It was a great trial to the monks to administer these penances to their Prior ; but if entreaties failed, he appealed in the name of obedience, and there was no escape.

He returned oftenest to those who were bravest in using the lash. Sometimes he would insist on their striking him on the face and spitting on him,

speaking to him as a vile slave : 'Be off, and clean my shoes ; fetch me so and so, you miserable wretch !' exacting the *thee* and *thou* from them, which in French conveys such a tone of contempt. He was naturally so sensitive that he suffered double what another would from corporal chastisements. His whole body would writhe with the pain, while his flesh bled and shuddered ; but still the cry was 'Go on ! strike harder !'

Many a time, after one of these scourgings, the monk who had reluctantly acted as executioner would fall down beside the half-fainting sufferer, and, with tears in his eyes, implore his forgiveness. 'Ah ! this is nothing,' Père Lacordaire would reply. 'You stop when you see me suffering too much ; but when Jesus Christ writhed under the blows, they only struck Him harder.'

His horror of ostentation was so great that he hardly ever performed any penance, however slight, in public, and yet the thirst for humiliation often made this restraint a trial. On one occasion he was unable to resist it. It was at Châlons. One day, after an instruction to the monks on humility, he felt irresistibly drawn to add example to precept, and, descending from the Prior's seat, he knelt down, and desired every member of the community

to give five-and-twenty lashes on his naked shoulders. The community was numerous, and the scourging lasted a long time. When the Prior rose he was pale and trembling, but a divine light was on his brow.

The chapter-hall at Flavigny was supported by a pillar. On arriving at this monastery, Père Lacordaire's first act was to go and make his confession to the master of novices, and ask his permission to perform a few penances. Two novices were then placed at his disposal. He desired them to tie him to the pillar, his hands behind his back, and his shoulders naked, and then to scourge him with all their might. The novices would sometimes try to foil his intention by striking gently ; but it was of no use : he would remain there until they did as he wished, imploring them to have no pity on him. He had a special predilection for this kind of torture, which reminded him of the sufferings of his Divine Master.

There used to be under the old church of the Carmelites in Paris a crypt, or subterranean chapel, where the bones of the victims of the great Revolution were arranged symmetrically at the end of a long corridor, with rows of skulls and cross-bones piled up on either side. In this chapel Mass was

daily celebrated for the dead. Père Lacordaire selected it as an appropriate place for the scene of his penances, and frequently went down into it alone, or accompanied by a religious, and there offered up his body as a victim of love. One Good Friday he fashioned a large cross, and had it planted in this underground chapel ; he then had himself tied to it with cords, and hung there for three hours. And these instances of his love of the Cross are given, not as isolated proofs, Père Chocarne tells us, but as samples of his daily habits.

The days of his conferences at Notre Dame were sanctified in a special way by meditation and silence. He breakfasted alone, and ate meat by a special dispensation ; but his meal was always a very light one. If the weather was fine, he went down into the garden and walked slowly up and down, stopping now and then in contemplation before a blossom, and lifting up his soul to God on the harmonies of nature. At eleven he set out with his friend, M. Cartier. At three he returned home, overcome with bodily fatigue, but his brow alight and his soul overflowing with love and joy. He was generally obliged to go to bed to repair his exhausted strength, and then one of his young friends came in and conversed with him familiarly

on the love of God and the happiness of the religious life. When the supper-bell rang, the meal was served to him just as it was to the community—two boiled eggs and salad. After partaking of it, he resumed the thread of the conversation where he had left it. He never spoke of his conferences unless it was to beg some one to criticise them, and if any friend pointed out something that needed correction, he received the reproof with unfeigned gratitude.

His wonderful love of humiliation found many ways of satisfying itself; amongst others, that of confessing the grave sins of his life over and over again, and to all sorts of persons. He generally had several confessors and correctors in every house of the order, and on arriving for a visitation his first act was to go and find one of them, and confess all the sins he had committed since his last visit, after which he never failed to beg for a sharp discipline.

He frequently, for his greater humiliation, chose his correctors amongst the lay-brothers. There was one whom he held in high esteem—a simple soul, whose vocation he had directed, and who repaid his kind offices by unbounded love and veneration. Père Lacordaire came to him one

day, and, kneeling down before him, said, 'My dear Brother, one of the advantages of the religious life is to have friends near us who warn us of our faults. Every religious has generally his Brother corrector. You shall be mine ; and in order that you may know me thoroughly, I will confess to you the sins of my life.' The Brother protested that it was impossible. 'I am not a priest, Father ; I implore you—I entreat you !' But Père Lacordaire insisted. 'It is just because you are not a priest that I have chosen you,' he said ; 'I don't want you to give me absolution, but to have the charity to listen to my sins in order to humiliate me and punish me as I deserve.'

There was no getting out of it ; the Brother had to hear him to the end. When Père Lacordaire had finished, he said, 'Now you know me. If you love me a little for Jesus Christ's sake, you will tell me every fault you notice in me ; you will treat me like the vile wretch I am, and chastise me without mercy.'

The Brother found the task a hard one, but he nerved himself by love and gratitude to do what seemed at first impossible. 'And no pen,' says Père Chocarne, 'could ever describe the unheard-of devices which the holy religious had recourse to in

order to humble himself in the eyes of this poor Brother.'

One evening this same lay-Brother, being on duty in the refectory, was the cause of a delay. The Prior never kept any one waiting, but he liked others to be equally punctual. When at last the Brother arrived, Père Lacordaire felt a movement of impatience, which betrayed itself in his face. That evening he went to the lay-Brother, confessed this fault on his knees, begged the Brother's pardon, and desired him to strike him on the face, and send him away with opprobrious epithets.

He was pitiless towards himself for these movements of impatience. A circumstance that tried him sorely in this respect was to be interrupted in his work. He spoke of this one day to his confessor, and begged him to help him to correct it. 'For this purpose,' he said, 'you will burst into my cell at any hour and without knocking, and if you see the slightest sign on my face, you will give me the discipline.'

His confessor that very day put his penitent's patience to the trial by breaking in on him in the midst of his work. Père Lacordaire at once rose and knelt down before him. 'But, Father, I saw

nothing,' said the intruder. 'You did not see it, but I felt it,' was the reply ; and, baring his shoulders, he handed him the discipline.

This humble cell was witness to many sublime acts of penance and humiliation, but perhaps none more striking than the following :

His insatiable love of humiliations vented itself, as we have said, in frequent general confessions. On every great anniversary of his life he made a full general confession, and he was ingenious in varying the forms of this penance. On one particular occasion, his birthday, he stripped himself of a portion of his clothes and put a cord round his neck, and it was agreed that after every grave sin that he confessed, the confessor would trample him under foot, or give him a certain number of lashes with a horsewhip. The confession lasted an hour. When it was over he entreated the confessor to drag him along the floor of his cell by the cord round his neck, to call him by the vilest names, to spit in his face, to treat him like an unclean animal, as he deserved to be treated by God, whom he had so grievously offended.

These outbreaks of the fire of divine love which consumed him ended generally with some spiritual converse, and no language could convey any idea

of the flames of love which then broke forth in his words.

‘Ah!’ he would exclaim, ‘to suffer while loving God is not suffering. I shall go to purgatory, but there I shall love. . . . If the world only knew the joy it is to be flagellated for Him whom we love! Do you know where I take refuge when by chance some evil thought presents itself to me? I fancy myself on the rack, surrounded by the executioners, and dying for Jesus Christ. No happiness seems to me to be comparable with this, and all the pleasures of the world vanish before that image!’

Wonderful madness of the Cross! It was this sublime folly that inspired Père Lacordaire with his passion—we can use no other word—for making general confessions. Here he found the two delights that satiated his thirsting soul—humiliation and suffering. He would have confessed to the first person he met when this fire of divine love pressed him, and it required the authority of his superiors to prevent his making a general confession to the young novices, whom he knew to be specially impressed by his genius. ‘And what great harm is there in their knowing all the evil I have done?’ he would answer; ‘they will know it

at the day of judgment, they and the rest of the world !'

When a man of the world, in making his confession, seemed to shrink from the avowal of some grievous fault, Père Lacordaire would say : ' Why do you hesitate ? whom are you afraid of ? I wish I had leave to confess the sins of my life to you, and then your confession would be easy enough !'

It is quite impossible to guess, even approximately, the number of general confessions he made during his religious life, and equally impossible to give any adequate idea of the humiliations which he invented for himself at each one of them.

His love of mortification was equal to his love of humiliation. In spite of the precautions he took to hide his austerities, it was well known by those near him that he took the discipline every day, and sometimes several times a day. During Lent, and especially on Good Friday, he scourged himself, and compelled others to scourge him, until his body was one wound. He confessed to one who had his confidence that immediately after his conversion he was often seized with an almost incontrollable longing to stop one of the little Savoyards in the street and pay him for whipping him publicly. But this is nothing. Six weeks before

his death, when he lay on his bed of suffering, worn to the last degree by fever and pain, unable to take any food, and kept alive solely by the power of his undaunted soul, he entreated one of the fathers to give him the discipline, as he had not the strength to do it himself.

The devotion to which his soul turned, as to its centre, and loved above all others, was Jesus Crucified. His love of the Cross was carried to an excess which in some of its manifestations, as in that of his frequent general confessions, has not been surpassed in the lives of the most ascetic Saints.

Next to Calvary, his great devotion was to the Eucharist. It was a wonderful lesson to see him saying Mass. He generally prepared himself for the solemn act by some of his favourite mortifications. If he had not time for this, he would call aside one of the lay-brothers to an inner sacristy, and, kneeling down, would kiss his feet, and, after remaining for some time in this humble posture, arise and go to celebrate the adorable Sacrifice.

All those who have had the privilege of assisting at Père Lacordaire's Mass speak of the deep impression it never failed to make on them.

‘Never shall I forget it,’ says one. ‘I have met but one priest who, at the altar, caused me the same emotion, and that was Pius IX.’ At Sorrèze, where he was overpowered with work, some one expressed surprise that he did not take the time of High Mass for the pupils to say his Breviary. ‘Mass is too sublime, too holy an action,’ was his reply, ‘to admit of our occupying ourselves with anything at it but what the priest is doing.’

His favourite devotion, next to the Cross and the Eucharist, was the Bible.

‘When I read the Gospel,’ he said, ‘every word appears to me like a flash of lightning, and brings me consolation.’ He had a special love for the Gospel of St. John and the Epistles of St. Paul.

The world saw little of this inner life of the great Dominican orator. If it had, how much of it would it have understood? It has sung pæans to his genius, but it has often cruelly misjudged the apostolic soul who counted this genius the least of God’s gifts.

Lacordaire’s voice in the pulpit had the loud triumphant ring of the archangel’s trumpet; it gave forth ‘no uncertain sound,’ but called men to judgment, and delivered to them the message of the King. While it rang out in lofty accents—

proud and pure and wonderful—men who listened spellbound little dreamed how far apart the preacher was from the priest, from the humble monk, who knelt at the lay-brother's feet, and bade him spit upon him and revile him.

He let crowns be laid upon his head, he, who so shunned the honours of this world ; but in this he put self out of sight completely, and accepted the homage solely as given to the Church or the order he represented. It required the pressure of authority to induce him to accept a *fauteuil* in the Academy. Madame Swetchine, with her dying breath, urged him to yield, declaring he had no right to reject an honour tendered by the best part of the nation to God, in the person of one of His ministers.

He showed himself for a moment—for one week—in the National Assembly, in the same spirit of self-surrender ; but he quickly saw that his presence could not serve the cause which had prompted the sacrifice, and he withdrew to his cell and appeared no more on the battle-field of this world's affairs.

We have said that he shunned applause ; he dreaded it.

He preached at Lyons in the winter of 1845. From five o'clock in the morning—an hour before

the cathedral doors were opened—the crowd was immense. Merchants left their counting-houses, and barristers their courts, and waited seven or eight hours for the sake of the one hour's intellectual treat, and when it came, it required all the prestige of the orator's authority to keep down the acclamations that threatened to break forth continually during his discourse. One evening, after one of these inebriating triumphs, Père Lacordaire, who was the guest of the Presbytery, was late for dinner. His extreme punctuality made a few minutes' delay a matter of surprise, and one of the priests went to look for him. He knocked at the door of the Father's room, but there was no answer ; he opened it, and beheld him prostrate on the ground before his crucifix, and uttering a prayer which his sobs rendered inarticulate.

'Father! what has happened?' cried the priest, kneeling down beside him, and taking him in his arms.

'I am frightened!' replied Père Lacordaire, lifting his face bathed in tears.

'At what, Father? At what?'

'I am frightened at this success!'

There was, in truth, little cause to be frightened with his soul so full of holy fear.

His love of humiliation induced him, to the end of his life, to seek after the lowest offices in the house. He would steal away furtively from the others, and help the lay-brothers in the work of cleaning and sweeping; sometimes putting an apron before him, he would take his part in the cooking. He was rather proud, indeed, of his skill in dressing eggs after some particular fashion known to his mother's cook; but history makes no record of his efforts in this line.

One day, when he was no longer young, a friend asked him if he did not consider himself exempted from such menial and fatiguing work, by the heavy labour of preaching and the ministry. 'No,' replied the Dominican; 'even in his old age, a religious should remain attached to the Cross of Jesus Christ, and by his humility be an example to the younger ones.'

He invited several members of the Third Order for a walk, one afternoon at Lyons. The roads were muddy, and the party returned with their boots very dirty. Père Lacordaire made them all sit down, and said laughingly, 'It is my fault that your boots are in such a sorry plight, so you must let me clean them.' And, armed with brushes and blacking, he polished away, in spite of all protest.

He retained to the last the joyous spirits of a child. No one was more full of fun and anecdote at recreation than the hard-worked Prior, whose presence was the signal for general gaiety and *entrain*.

His activity at work was prodigious ; he got through an enormous correspondence daily, and never encroached either on his hours for sleep or recreation, no matter what the extra press of work was.

‘Let us crucify ourselves to our pen!’ he said to Frederic Ozanam ; and later the same friend writes to him : ‘I am killing myself ; I feel it, but it is God who has willed it.’ Like brave knights, they both fell sword in hand, fighting at their post ; fighting in the same cause and under the same flag, but not in the same regiment. Père Lacordaire was a Liberal in politics. He accepted the Republic of ’48 and served it loyally, but he only looked on it as a plank after shipwreck.

Perhaps it was a prophetic instinct that made him distrust the honey-tongued Republic of ’48, and warned him to withhold his deepest sympathies from a state of things destined to end in a despotism founded on blood. At any rate, he preached for the last time in Notre Dame during the Lent of

1851, and, to the great surprise of his hearers, took a solemn farewell of them at the close of his Conferences. His emotion was so deep that it required all the strength of his will to control it, while he uttered his adieux to '*la grande patrie*,' as he was fond of calling the cathedral. The *Coup d'Etat* took place in the following December, and the repeated solicitations of the Archbishop of Paris failed to overcome his reluctance to preach in Notre Dame after that. From this time forth, until his death, those sublime gifts of eloquence were devoted chiefly to the instruction of his religious and of the youth on whom he lavished the zeal and strength of his remaining years.

The history of his labours at Sorrèze forms one of the most touching and beautiful pages of his life. The education of youth had been one of the earliest dreams of his religious vocation. He never forgot how he had lost his own faith and the purity of his soul at the Lyceum of Dijon, and he longed to provide a remedy against a like evil for those who came after him. But there were many obstacles in the way of opening Dominican colleges. The austere rule of the Grand Order did not admit of it. The perpetual fasting and the preaching of missions were incompatible with the laborious

duties of teaching. It was necessary, therefore, to create a new branch of the Third Order, whose special mission should be the education of the rich. After endless delays and difficulties, and an amount of opposition which would have broken the determination of a less valiant soul and a less indomitable will, Père Lacordaire succeeded in carrying out his design, and a Dominican college was established in the old school of Sorrèze, once so famous in the hands of the Benedictines.

In the year 1854 he took possession of the place. The prospect of spending the remnant of his life amidst the young, whom he so tenderly loved, filled him with joy. He grew young himself, he who had retained so much of the bright buoyancy and spirit of youth, notwithstanding the hard battle he had fought with life. He became, in the fullest sense of that blessed name, the father of the immense young family whom he called *mes enfants*.

Père Lacordaire had no ready-made system of education, but he had a principle, and this was, that human nature is more amenable to love than to fear, more easily led by persuasion than by force. The men whom he formed on this principle are the living proofs of its results.

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Would that we might linger with them at Sorèze, and see how 'le Père,' as he was universally called by monks and pupils, made himself a child with children, joining in their games, listening to their troubles, nursing them in sickness, preparing his weekly sermons to them as carefully as if these schoolboys were the exacting audience that crowded round him at Notre Dame, and gaining such complete ascendancy over their young hearts that to please 'le Père,' or to receive a frown from him, became the greatest reward and the most dreaded punishment that could be held out to them.

In undertaking this arduous mission, Père Lacordaire did not sever himself from the Grand Order. He continued a member of it till he died. Indeed, it may be truly said that this fidelity killed him. He died of overwork, falling upon a frame which was weakened by austerities; he never relaxed an iota of the severe discipline of the rule in his own favour; he continued to fast, to practise mortifications, to observe the strict letter of the rule of St. Dominic, while he taught and preached and spent himself in answering the ceaseless demands made upon his energy, moral and physical, by the young community around him. He lived in the midst of them, at their beck and call late

and early, while his mind was burdened by weighty and multiplied cares from without, and his body exhausted by fasts and vigils.

In the winter of 1860 he returned from a journey to Paris with a severe cold, which he had neglected. This was the beginning of the end. After vainly struggling against the cries of the poor body which he had driven like a slave, and which had served him hitherto so pliantly, he was compelled to surrender, and let the slave 'rest a little while' before it lay down to die. He wrote a touchingly humble letter to all the priors of the order, begging them to grant him the indulgence of a secretary and a visitor, the one to abridge his correspondence, the other to spare him two months of travelling, for the visitations of the various houses at a moment when he most needed repose.

Needless to say, the request was promptly granted. That summer the venerable invalid employed his two months' respite in sojourning at a watering-place which had been recommended by the medical men. But the waters were of little use, and he was obliged after this to give up hearing the confessions of the school, a labour of love which both he and they regretted bitterly to see interrupted. All that year he went slowly but

steadily downwards, and the following summer his weakness increased to a degree that left no room for hope. Père Lacordaire himself had no illusions from the first. He saw that the sands were running down, and he offered the sacrifice of his death to God, as he had made the sacrifice of his life to Him : generously, once, and for ever.

He resigned his office of Provincial of the Grand Order into the hands of Père Jandel, the General.

Then his friends came to see him for the last time, some from near, some from a great distance. The Abbé Perreyve was the first to arrive. On the 25th of September M. de Montalembert came. Père Lacordaire rose to welcome his friend. Walking feebly, and wasted to a shadow, he advanced to the terrace of the convent to meet him. M. de Montalembert was struck to the heart, and embraced his friend with tears in his eyes. 'Never,' he exclaims, relating this last interview, 'never did I feel anything like the shock it gave me when I beheld the heart-breaking beauty of his face !'

The visit was followed by many others. His dear friend, M. Cartier, enjoyed the inestimable privilege of assisting every day at the Holy Sacrifice, which, during the last three months of Père

Lacordaire's life, was celebrated in his room. Those who beheld the dying soldier of the Cross as he lay there, following the priest at the altar, will never forget the lesson of faith that spectacle presented to them.

Meantime, prayers were going up on all sides for his recovery. The young novices of the whole Dominican Order disciplined themselves to blood, performed pilgrimages barefooted to shrines of devotion, passed the nights in unbroken vigils before the Blessed Sacrament. Many offered up their lives in exchange for that of their beloved Father. A novena was begun by the Fathers at Sorrèze, and on the last day the entire community went barefooted, and took the relics of St. Mary Magdalen from her altar, and carried them solemnly round the cloisters. It was a thrilling sight: the long line of monks, advancing slowly by torch-light through the deep gloom of the cloisters, while their voices rose in supplication, the pathetic verses of the psalms broken at intervals by sobs and tears, and then rising again in tones of more passionate entreaty. The night was spent in these fervent prayers and sighs.

The dying Father was overcome to tears when he heard of these proofs of his children's love. 'It

is too much ! my poor children, it is too much !' he exclaimed.

His love for the Cross, that ruling passion of his soul, grew stronger in death. When he could no longer perform acts of penance—and he was ingenious in devising them almost to the last—he would keep kissing his crucifix over and over again. When too weak even to hold it, he would beg some one to put it to his lips, and would murmur words of tender endearment while he pressed them to it.

The Holy Father had expressed the deepest concern as soon as he heard of the dangerous state of Père Lacordaire, and sent him his apostolic benediction, with an affectionate message, through the General of the Order, Père Jandel.

On the night of the 30th of October a severe crisis came on, and the agonies of pain became so great that the doctor who was attending him said it was time to administer Extreme Unction ; but when this was proposed to Père Lacordaire, he replied, 'No : it is too soon ; when it is time I will tell you.'

The next few days he was a good deal better. Then came, for the third time, a message from Rome with another blessing from the loving-

hearted Pontiff. Père Lacordaire was filled with gratitude for this new mercy. 'It is a grand thing to have a plenary indulgence from the Pope when one is going to appear before God !' he said exultingly.

On the night of the 5th of November another violent crisis came on ; his sufferings were awful to witness ; but the soldier of Christ crucified bore himself bravely through them. He knew now that 'it was time,' and on the morning of the 6th he asked for the last Sacraments.

The community and the elder pupils of the school assisted at the administration of the solemn rite. Père Lacordaire was calm, and answered the prayers collectedly, while every voice around him was choked with tears. When all was over, he took leave individually of each, embracing them, and giving them his blessing.

After this he remained absorbed in prayer for a long time.

The Fathers from the convent of Oullins, who had been warned by telegraph that the end was at hand, now arrived. Père Captier, who was destined to die a martyr's death,* had a long interview with

* P. Captier was massacred under the Commune at Arcueil.

him, relative to the convent of Oullins; Père Lacordaire questioned him in detail about the house and some new plantations, in which he had been interested.

The week dragged on in indescribable suffering; but the soul never lost its serenity for a moment. At last his weakness became so great that he could no longer articulate. When he tried to speak, his utterance was so confused that it was hardly possible to understand him. That glorious voice, whose eloquence had filled the world, was broken; those lips, on whose accents thousands had hung enraptured, could not ask for a cup of water. The only words intelligible to those around were: 'Thy will be done!' Even in this extremity his tongue found strength for that act of submission.

On the night of the 20th the agony began. It was terrible to witness. The religious knelt in prayer round the bed, helping the soul with their prayers, while the body struggled fiercely against the parting.

Suddenly, the dying man sat upright, and, lifting up his arms, cried out in a loud, clear voice, 'My God, my God, open to me! open to me!' Then he fell back upon the pillows, and spoke no

more. These were the last words he uttered on earth. He lingered till the 21st, the Feast of the Presentation, when at nine o'clock in the evening he calmly breathed his last. The parting sigh was so soft that those around did not know that the spirit had fled.

The goal was reached at last. The soldier of the Cross had won his crown, and passed into the Presence of his Lord.

THE END.

JULY 1885.

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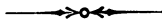
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